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# Critical Myths in Drama as Education

by

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

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CEB – Curriculum and Examinations Board

CP – Creative Partnerships

DES – Department for Education and Science

DiE – Drama in Education

ICT – Information and Communication Technologies

MI – Multiple Intelligences

NAYD – National Association for Youth Drama

NCCA – National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development

PCSP – Primary Curriculum Support Programme

PoET – Point of Entry Text

SEN – Special Educational Needs

TiE – Theatre in Education

UK – United Kingdom

US – United States

## DEDICATION

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This work is dedicated to my parents, Tim and Mary Finneran, who were, and who remain my first, and most important, educators.



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## DECLARATION

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This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any University. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

**Signed:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Michael J. Finneran**

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

## ABSTRACT

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Drama as education is a relatively young concern, which has been primarily occupied with developing a strong tradition of practice. As a result it has suffered from a dearth of theoretical and critical engagement. This situation has led to the existence of a range of unquestioned beliefs and practices that underpin much of the governance, traditions, knowledge and operation of drama in educational settings. The thesis examines the existence and location of the community of drama as education, reviews the discourse of the community, and seeks to understand previous attempts at demythologising.

This thesis proposes a critical understanding of the idea of myth in order that it can be used in a positive and beneficial manner. Utilising a post-modern critical research methodology, it constructs a *bricolage* of theoretical perspectives that collectively are used to locate, identify and interrogate areas of myth. A new typography of myth reveals four dominant areas of operation, and examines the manner in which myths impact upon the educational and cultural institutions in which they occur. The forces that conceive of, operate and perpetuate myth are understood to be language, power and ideology. These elements operate in conjunction with each other, with human agency at the helm.

The thesis is in nine chapters. Chapter 1 sets the scene and introduces the range of the research. It is followed by Chapter 2 which seeks to put in place a range of theoretical perspectives upon which the methodology is constructed. Chapter 3 provides further theoretical insight into the location of the research, and Chapter 4 constructs a critical mythic *bricolage*, defines its usage, and proposes a contemporary typology of myth. Chapter 5 identifies the 'Point of Entry Text' – the primary school drama curriculum in the Republic of Ireland, and deals with the category of governing myths. Chapter 6 is concerned with traditional myths, Chapter 7 examines epistemological myths, and Chapter 8 teases out operational myths. Finally, Chapter 9 looks to the future of myth after demythologising, and seeks to begin engaging with the inevitable process of remythologising.

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**MYTHS AND MYTHOLOGIES OF DRAMA,**  
**THEATRE AND EDUCATION**

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## Introduction

Drama is a ubiquitous force in our present world, an everyday and everywhere occurrence, as evidenced by the dramatic performances we view and listen to on television shows, videos, DVDs, films, computer screens, radios, in school classrooms, and, of course, in live theatre. Drama has become our principal means of expressing and interpreting the world as we explore and communicate ideas and information, social behaviours, values, feelings, and attitudes, with mass audiences greater than anyone had ever contemplated. We are entertained, informed, angered, persuaded, manipulated, or touched, both consciously and subliminally, by the thousands of performances we experience, and sometimes we are changed because of their influence and their impact on our lives. (Booth 2003, p.18)

Taken individually, any of the terms *drama*, *theatre* or *education* inspire confidence and assuredness on the part of those who engage in them as to what they represent: Educationalists typically have strong feelings on what they understand to be *education*, what works well, what is less useful, and so forth. Equally, those who work with, or in, or between (the importance of this semantic differentiation will become apparent presently) *drama* and *theatre* generally have little difficulty in describing with passion what exactly activity in their field represents; its strengths, failings, etc.

Unlike the situation portrayed in the broad and enlightened perspective offered by David Booth in the opening quotation, the problem around which this project pivots is that when these terms are brought together to describe a mutual area of concern and endeavour, levels of accord are difficult to come by. Definitions tend to centre around ideas of what drama education or theatre education are not, rather than be framed in a more inclusive manner. This is not a new problem, and it is frequently ignored in the interest of pragmatics. But it is a problem that has impacted negatively and continues to do so, upon the development of areas of

endeavour concerning *drama*, *theatre* and *education*, in a myriad of ways. The concern of this thesis is to firstly describe some of the difficulties that have arisen, but primarily to identify and understand reasons as to why they have come about, and to clearly mark the negative developmental influence they are having upon the fields and community involved in order that future avoidance is a possibility.

Some immediate clarity is required as to the parameters of this study. What understandings of *drama*, *theatre*, and *education* are to be propounded and consistently utilised in the work?; What is the problem in terms of how these terms and the areas of study and endeavour they describe, are understood and utilised?; Where is the work located, and why might that be of importance?; How is it proposed that the issue at hand might be logically, academically and rigorously interrogated?; What is it proposed will emerge from the study, and how might this contribute to the furtherance of the field(s) involved?

In addressing the first of these, it should be noted that this work is primarily concerned with the intersection of the fields of drama/theatre and education, and particularly how understandings of that area of intersection impact upon the manner in which drama is taught in schools. Also of importance within the broader context of this study is the role that drama and theatre artists, and artistic institutions see for themselves in education, and indeed how they perceive and understand the points of contact between those concerned primarily with artistic endeavour and those charged with an educational mission.

Historically, a divide has existed between the terms *drama* and *theatre*. For many, *drama* represents the practice and *theatre* the building. For others, *drama* is the amateur practice of the art, and *theatre* the professional execution. For more, *drama* refers to the literary dramatic text, and *theatre* the lived representation of those words. A simple web-search reveals a plethora of other distinctions. In the interest of clarity in this work, a way past this difficulty is essential. Martin Esslin's seminal structuralist work on the field of drama (1987) offers an inclusive understanding of *drama* as the overarching field of endeavour, and *theatre* the specific practice within that field. This choice is not without its problems (and ideological implications), and the difficulty of drawing any distinction is clearly signed by Esslin himself:

Definitions of concepts like 'drama' should, therefore, never be treated as normative, but as merely outlining the somewhat fluid boundaries of a given field. Whenever narrow, they invariably tended to have a cramping and deadening impact. ... (T)he concept of drama has an obvious, immediately recognised, central core, which can, if not defined, be described and circumscribed, but will always be surrounded by a penumbra of events and activities which, while partaking of some of its characteristics, will to some extent lack of others (1987, p.23).

Within this tolerant understanding of an overarching field of *drama*, the understanding of *theatre* to be used in this work is equally broad and inclusive but somewhat more defined:

(T)heatre is the live experience that is shared when people imagine and interact as if they were other than themselves in some other place at another time. Meanings in theatre are created by the actor, for both spectators and other participants, through the fictional and symbolic uses of human presence in time and space. These may be enhanced by the symbolic use of objects, sounds and lights. Theatre is understood through its conventions which are the indicators of the ways in which time, space and presence can interact and be imaginatively shaped to communicate different kinds of meanings (Neelands 1998, p.5).

Again, this choice of working definition represents a set of choices and emphases

on the part of the author, which is an inevitability of research of this nature. These choices and emphasis will be reflected and accentuated throughout the work. Generally, however, and in the interest of inclusive and transparent usage in this thesis, the phrase drama/theatre will be used as a description of the overarching field.

The central concern to be described in this thesis relates to a plethora of differing philosophies and understandings regarding the manner in which drama and theatre are taught in schools, as well as how people are inducted into and educated in both the broader field of *drama*, and the specific practice of *theatre*. In attempting to describe what will be referred throughout the work as *drama as education*, semantics and involved historical explanations come into play. These too, will be teased out at various points in this work. Suffice to say for introductory purposes that the term *drama as education* will be treated in this work in much the same manner as Esslin treats *drama*, i.e. with *drama as education* as the all-encompassing site for work that involves learning in and through *drama* and *theatre*, and which includes widely recognised movements such as ‘drama-in-education’, ‘process drama’ ‘living-through drama’, ‘educational drama’ and many others. The phrase *drama as education* has been chosen for reasons of inclusiveness, and because it encapsulates the idea of drama having a function as education along with the many other functions it fulfils, and as described by Booth above. The choice of phrase is also made in an effort to avoid resonance with historical usage elsewhere<sup>i</sup>. *Drama as education* has existed in as a broad concern in many guises for over a century (cf. Bolton

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<sup>i</sup> ‘Drama as education’ was used as a book title by Bolton (1984). He makes the case in that work that drama should be at the heart of every classroom and curriculum, with all education as drama, and all drama as education. It has not been used frequently since that work.



1985, 1998; Booth & Martin-Smith 1998), but little consensus exists globally or locally as to the best way to conceptualise or pursue it (cf. Fleming 2001, Gallagher & Booth 2003, Jackson 2007).

The site of the research is fully described and explored in Chapter Three. For now, it is sufficient to note that the applied element of the research is located in the Republic of Ireland (hereafter referred to as Ireland), and the specific approaches to drama as education taken in that country. Of particular interest to the work is the arena of primary level education, given that the researcher is professionally concerned with that area specifically, but also because there exists a formal national drama curriculum for that level in Ireland. It is the intent, however, that the methodological framework adopted in the research, as well as the analysis and the findings would have relevance beyond the specific cultural location of this document, and would offer an insight into the progress necessary for development in the broader international community of *drama as education*.

And so to how the at issue at hand can be framed and examined. This work is premised upon the assertion that myths exist in the world of drama as education, and that they need to be understood in order, ‘to identify the key values, beliefs knowledge and power positions that shape and influence education policies and practice’ (Sugrue 2004, p.169). Such a statement requires quite an amount of explication and clarification before proceeding to explore its veracity. The use of the term myth in it is quite deliberate in that it evokes a clear sense of how deeply-ingrained but also imperceptible some of the assumptions and knowledge-base of the community of drama as education are, as well as how

destructive they can be. Moreover, from a methodological point-of-view, it suggests a way forward in identifying and examining these phenomena.

### **Myths & Mythologies**

Historically, the most compelling and resonant images and the stories in which they are embodied have gathered to themselves the force of myth. Myth is, it must be said, is a term used in a very messy way in everyday discourse and used in very contradictory ways in academic discourse. ... But myth is not necessarily either primitive or false. It can be primitive or modern. It can be true or false, though not in the same sense as a simple declarative sentence of mundane fact can be true or false. (Sheehan 1987, p.1)

Away from the traditional context, the word myth suggests primarily negative connotations. A quick review of its usage in academic titles sees it intimately associated with words such as *reality*, *dispelling*, *objectivity*, *popular*, *breaking*, *fact*, *debunking* and *deconstructing*. The inference therefore, is that myths; are not real, are based on less than fact, are widely perceived, are subjectively felt or understood, and require close examination in order to discover the ‘truth’. This relatively static understanding is borne out by the limited amount written with explicit regard to the myths of the educational world. Writing on educational myths, Combs suggests an understanding which does nothing to supplant the lay interpretation:

... (Myths are) the greatest deterrent to innovation and change. Myths are false or inaccurate beliefs that are generally held to be true. ...Myths have hampered progress and frustrated the achievement of human goals throughout history. They are still at it. In education they exist by the dozens. If today’s schools are to meet the challenges of our changing society, we must break ourselves loose from the myths that bind us. (Combs 1979, p.ix)

Before any further discussion of education myths however, it is necessary to backtrack somewhat and establish a clear link between traditional ideas of myth and the more modern and applied usage proposed here.

A contemporary understanding may not be as far removed from origins of myth as might be imagined, with a shared heritage in the Greek idea of story or *mythos*, a form which was meant to educate, explain, allay and indeed, instil fear. Kearney (2002) puts forth the idea that mythic narrative evolved over time into two main branches, historical and fictional. The historical strand has remained somewhat truer to its origins, whilst the fictional narrative branch has further evolved to incorporate a strongly synthetic nature, which draws liberally from voices such as the lyric, the dramatic, the epic and that of the chronicler (2002, p.10). What both retain is a mimetic function, true to the origins of *mythos* as *mimesis*. Kearney goes on to suggest that this involves much more than a mere mirroring of reality. He notes that:

When Aristotle defines *mimesis* in his *Poetics* as the ‘imitation of an action’, he means a creative redescription of the world such that hidden patterns and hitherto unexplored meanings can unfold. As such *mimesis* is essentially tied to *mythos* taken as the transformative plotting of scattered events into a new paradigm ... It has little or nothing to do with the old naturalist convention that art simply holds a mirror up to nature. (2002, p.12)

This understanding of the origins and nature of myth is central and seminal to the proposed usage of myth in this thesis. It becomes even clearer when in the same work the nature of narrative is interrogated under the headings of plot (*mythos*), re-creation (*mimesis*), release (*catharsis*), wisdom (*phronesis*) and ethics (*ethos*). In the ethics section, Kearney argues that an approach of critical hermeneutics (interpretation within a critical framework) is essential in understanding and

interrogating stories in order to incorporate all aspects of the teller, the story, the listener and the world within which the story is situated (2002, pp.150-151). This demands the recognition of human agency as being central to all aspects of storying. Kearney applies this tenet to the historicity of story, and in attempting to come to an understanding, cites Habermas' idea of interests, especially that of communicative interest. His conclusion is of particular relevance:

This interestedness is essentially ethical in that what we consider *communicable* and *memorable* is also what we consider *valuable*. What is most worthy of being preserved in memory is precisely those 'values which ruled the individual actions, the life of the institutions, and the social struggles of the past'. ... Storytelling, we may conclude, then, is never neutral. Every narrative bears some evaluative charge regarding the events narrated and the actors featured in the narration. (2002, pp.154-155)

Working within this particular conception of myth allows the establishment of a clear link between traditional myth, story and importantly for this work, a critical understanding of myth. This understanding of myth as not fixed and being open to a critically interpretative approach is of fundamental importance for the construction of the methodological stance of this project, for it allows myth to be understood as encapsulating a range of ideological meanings, and more interestingly, foregrounds the importance of people (through the philosophically based ideas of human agency and rhetoric) in creating and perpetuating myth.

The field of myth and mythologies is, in itself, a substantial field of academic endeavour. Too often, the term myth is used in an uncritical and uninterrogated fashion in scholarly discourse. Given the critical framework within which the research will take place, it is essential that an informed and clear understanding of myth is put forth. A detailed analysis of some of the relevant literature of the

field of mythology will be made in Chapter Four, with specific reference to and particular note taken of the work of Kirk (1970), Schilbrack (2002), Flood (2002a, 2002b) and Segal (1999, 2002, 2004). A firm understanding of a contemporary, politicised myth will be proffered at that point, along with a new typology that will enable classification and understanding of the myths in drama as education.

### **Educational Myths**

Research in the field of education makes significant use of the term myth, but in a largely uncritical manner. Works specifically exploring the nature as opposed to the implications of educational myths are limited, despite the sizeable growth of critical educational studies in the last two decades. Steinberg's work (1968) is perhaps the most seminal of the early critiques, and sets the tone for the beginning of a new epoch in critical studies in education, without ever specifically addressing emergent ideas in critical theory. From the outset of the work, Steinberg's views are evident:

Education has no aims, no purposes. People have aims and purposes. Education is not a person; it is not even a thing. However, like a thing education has its uses. The purposes of education are the purposes that people have for education. Still, many of us do talk about the *purposes* of education. We shall try to see what is entailed in taking this sort of talk seriously and why people should want to talk this way. Perhaps, in the end, we shall come to agree that the conventions for debating educational purposes are not to be taken literally or very seriously. (1968, p.3)

This aspiration to re-examine and re-constitute the discourse of education, and to introduce an ever-present strain of criticism in educational dialogue continues throughout the book. Steinberg differentiates between levels of critique and

criticism, noting that a continuum exists stretching from ‘complaining’ through ‘fault-finding’ to ‘expert critique’ of education. He also raises some salient and salutary questions with regard to the nature of those who engage in educational critique, particularly noting issues surrounding education as a discipline and therefore how it is understood (1968, pp. 87-90). Though these arguments are somewhat dated in the context of this study, their importance lies in the fact that from the outset of what can be termed critical (in nature, if not specifically in methodology) educational research, the multifarious nature of educational studies (particularly the links between education, sociology and philosophy), those who work within it, and therefore the nature of the grand myths in education, are problematic. This breadth of voices clamoring to be heard remains fundamentally true particularly in drama as education, and as will become apparent at a later stage, creating a space and a system that gives voice to all, is a challenge that lies at the heart of this project.

Combs (1979), takes a different tack in choosing to explore the more obvious myths regarding learning and schooling in the United States. Classifying them as ‘cultural myths’, ‘myths about persons and behaviour’ or ‘myths about learning and schooling’ (1979, p.8), he critiques a wide range of everyday assumptions pertaining to education, and presents a clear case for the banishment of most, without necessarily delving into the reasons for their having come about in the first instance. This contribution is important, however, in that it firmly establishes the need to clearly identify those deeply ingrained myths, as well as the more plainly manifest (which are therefore all the more intractable), educational myths.

A relatively recent collection of writings from O'Hagan (1999) gives a more local and contemporary flavour to the idea of educational myths. The articles range from those describing what can be termed operative myths, such as myths in school management to those concerned with more intangible and philosophical aspects of school life such as the idea of community. In examining the myth of the school as community, he notes that it, '...marginalizes the personal in favour of the functional, it dissociates means from ends, and it uses a dissembling rhetoric of empowerment to neutralize freedom and equality' (1999, p.13). All of this, O'Hagan argues, is masked by the assumption of community that is aligned with the idea of school, and as a result, this myth serves to undermine the true purpose of education.

Other contemporary writings referring to myths in education (although by and large not specifically) tend to come from either the interpretivist tradition (e.g. Gordon 2005), or more commonly the areas of critical pedagogy and action research, as well as critical educational theory. These methodological variants employing critical theory will be discussed elsewhere, but have principally come to the fore since the 1970s, as evidenced in the works of Apple (1982, 1990, 2000, 2003), Freire (1973, 1985, 1996), Giroux (1981, 2000), Giroux & McLaren (1989, 1994), hooks (1994, 2003), Popkewitz (1984, 1999) and Popkewitz *et al* (1998, 1999, 2001) amongst others. The differences between these particular variations are obvious in many respects, less so in others. Critical pedagogy and action research are more specifically geared towards understanding the praxis of teaching and learning, albeit with considerable differences in terms of the *modus*

*operandi* of the researcher, whilst critical educational theory is essentially concerned with the investigation of ideals of power, knowledge and discourse within the field of education as a whole. Fundamentally, however, it can be argued that the idea of educational myths and the existence of mythologies in the broadest possible sense lie at the heart of all three research areas, especially the latter. This is contextualised in more concrete manner by Apple:

The study of the interconnections between ideology and curriculum and between ideology and educational argumentation has important implications for the curriculum field and for the educational theory and policy in general. For as I shall argue throughout this volume, we need to examine critically not just ‘how a student acquires more knowledge’ (the dominant question in our efficiency minded field), but ‘why and how particular aspects of the collective culture are presented in school as objective, factual knowledge.’ How, *concretely*, may official knowledge represent ideological configurations of the dominant interests in a society? How do schools legitimate these limited and partial standards of knowing as unquestioned truths? ... The final query seeks to make educators more aware of the ideological and epistemological commitments they tacitly accept and promote by using certain models and traditions in their own work. (Apple 1990, p.14)

Popkewitz & Fendler, in discussing critical educational theory, identify a number of contemporary issues that are relevant in the effort to locate the idea of myth in this work. They suggest that of particular importance to contemporary theory are: (i) interdisciplinarity; (ii) the move away from psychology as a means of explaining the problematic in pedagogy; methodological and theoretical challenges; (iii) both the limitations of classical Marxism and the relationship of critical theories to classical Marxism; (iv) a blurred and relational concept of the idea of ‘critical’; (v) the relations between knowledge, the practices of educational sciences and the politics of change; (vi) the move away from critical theory as being solely a critique of capitalism and liberalism; (vii) the changing terrain of social movements (Popkewitz & Fendler 1999, pp.7-8). Of particular



importance in this characterisation is the post-Marxist nature of much critical education research, and within that, the centrality of the ‘structure-agency’ equation. Although the research structures that may be employed within the critical approach are structurally influenced from the Marxist tradition, they are blurred and flexible enough to be deeply influenced by human agency, particularly when it is collectively done. This has implications for this thesis on a number of levels in terms of the construct of the research methodology, but also in terms of the foregrounding of human agency throughout the work, and in particular its relationship with notions of field and community, which are the theoretical terms that will be used to describe collectivity. What must also be taken from this description of contemporary critical theory is that the critical mythic *bricolage* to be proposed presently in this work needs to be fundamentally in keeping with these qualities of critical educational research, both in terms of spirit and execution. In short, what must be striven for in describing a critical educational theory suitable for drama as education is that which would facilitate the ideal described by Masschelein:

... a critical educational theory would have to show how the history of education and educational theory is not just the history of a questionable and dubious ‘science’ on its way to becoming ‘normal’ and acceptable, but is at the same time part of a history, in which people conduct and govern others and themselves in the light of particular truth games. There is indeed an intrinsic relation between intellectual and practical educational technologies, on the one hand, and the way in which political power is wielded in our societies, as well as the way in which we govern ourselves, on the other. (2004, p.362)

### **Myths in Drama as Education**

Drama as education, however one defines it, is a relatively young community, particularly so in terms of research. A critical mass of writings first began to

appear in the mid 1950's in the United Kingdom, and since that time, there has been a steady and noticeable rate of growth in the discourse of the community: these are in the form of reports and templates of successful teaching activities for other practitioners to use; but also philosophical treatises as to varying aspects of the manner in which children and young people interact with drama, as well as reports on specific research projects set up to analyse varying elements of praxis. Some writers have begun the process of charting the development of the field (O'Connor 2003, pp. 35-50; Bolton 1998) and particularly the work of individual practitioners (Booth & Martin-Smith 1998, Bolton 2004; Taylor & Warner 2006), but nothing that approaches a definitive critical history has yet to be written. As the range of topics has broadened, so too has the geographical spread, whilst research on drama as education still emanates predominantly from English-speaking countries – Australia, the United States, Canada and increasingly the Scandinavian countries are to the fore in active discourse. The reasons for the growth in interest and activity in drama as education are, of course, multifarious and linked with macro-economic, political and socio-cultural as well as educational reasons. Nicholson notes one of the stronger educational reasons:

Drama and pedagogy are both *activities*, contingent on the cultural contexts in which they take place, and the process of bringing them together has been regarded as a powerful way of encouraging creativity and challenging passivity. (2005, p.38)

She continues with a word of warning:

The questions of where knowledge is situated, what forms of knowledge are valued, and how knowledge is shared, remain a major preoccupation ... there is no one pedagogical method that might be universally effective, or universally appropriate. Any approach which advocates a 'one size fits all' learning policy is likely to ignore local dynamics and the concerns of particular interest groups. (*ibid.*)

Nicholson continues by emphasising the local, embodied and shared nature of knowledge in drama, and suggests that it is created through participation with others.

The ‘major preoccupation’ with epistemology that Nicholson cites is shared in this work, and on a broader scale. As already stated this research is premised upon the idea that the community of drama as education is particularly susceptible to myth, and that as a result of ongoing processes of mythologising taking place over the formative years of the community, there are quite a strong number of dominant myths evident in the discourse of the field. This hypothesis is reinforced in the few critical analyses of the development and structure of the field that have been written thusfar. Fleming, in an interesting and provocative discussion as to the ‘recent history of drama teaching’ (2001, p.1) clearly alludes to an established mythology:

... (I)t is difficult to know how best to represent the development of drama teaching in the last 40 years or what stance to take at the present time. ... It is important, however, to know which issues are worth addressing even if they seem at times to be difficult to resolve. There is an argument for saying that to engage in any degree of seriousness with the business of teaching drama is inevitably to grapple with difficulties which seem unresolvable. To ignore them is to suffer from what Wittgenstein describes as a ‘loss of problems’, a condition he ascribed to some philosophers. ... What I take Wittgenstein to mean here is the tendency to oversimplify, brought about by a failure to slow down, to pause and focus on the particular issues in some depth. It is that ‘dwelling within’ which is missing from much contemporary discourse in drama education. (Fleming 2001, pp.4-5)

This suggestion that some fundamental beliefs are rarely questioned by those who ‘dwell within’ is echoed elsewhere in writings in drama as education.

Initially it found voice in the search for clarity and definition required to help a new field grow (McGregor et al. 1977, pp. 3-5). From there, the plea for meaning and exploration became somewhat more confrontational with a questioning of the so-called pretensions of the drama-in-education form by those opposed to what to them appeared to be a narrowing of the theatre form to a single strand of practice (Hornbrook 1998a, pp. 3-6). More recently, and as alluded to by Fleming above, this tacit mythological questioning has taken the form of a desire for consensual thinking and bridge-building with regard to drama as education (O'Neill 1995a, p.xiv). The overt seeking out of consensual positions can be seen most clearly in the writing of one of the most dominant figures of the drama as education community of the past half-century, Gavin Bolton. In his analysis of classroom drama, his rationale in examining the work of five influential British practitioners, is with a view to not simply understanding, but to use his analysis as the basis for a revised conceptual framework of the idea of acting as the basis for understanding of classroom drama (1998, p.xix). That in itself speaks of a perceived chasm to be bridged. Berry's work (2000) goes further in attempting to describe that chasm. She suggests that the dramatic arts and education are in crisis, and that the restrictions of our modern world are in need of unpacking in order to provide a viable place for them in schools. She proposes a singular, yet multifaceted and critical way forward:

... (It is the peeling back of the layers of culture to see and rethink the world in new ways. It requires a willingness to participate in counter-memory, and counter-hegemonic theories and practices that allow us to intervene in all of these constructions of modern society and move us into postmodern constructions (2000, p.4)

It is held in this work that many of the myths of drama as education, implicit or explicit, have remained relatively constant, with some contextual, locational and

situational alterations, right throughout the period of development in the mid/late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Some of this lack of movement can be attributed to a suspicion of academic research activity that was not clearly grounded in practical pedagogical activity (Taylor 2006, p.3). Fleming alludes elsewhere in his work to the phenomenon of static understandings, and a community seemingly afraid at times to deal with the bigger theories, by talking about ‘...the claims and counter claims which are common in writing about drama and which are often couched in theoretical terms (or at best based on idealised accounts of practice)’ (1994, p.14). This began to change in the mid-nineties with a raft of research publications; Somers (1996a), Taylor (1996) and Saxton & Miller (1998). More recent writings would seem to indicate that cognisance is being taken of direction suggested by Berry, with varying works from Anderson (2004), Winston (2005), Neelands (2004), Nicholson (2005), Ackroyd (2006), O’Toole (2006) and Gallagher (2007) clearly sign-posting a move away from the traditional constraints of research in drama as education.

In terms of moving this project forward, what is necessary now becomes somewhat clearer. A research methodology unique to the task at hand, and drawing from primary sources has to be established and defended. The site of the research needs to be clearly established, and the fields of drama/theatre and education, as well as the community of drama as education require exploration. Thirdly, the myths and mythologies that it is proposed exist need to be clearly identified and delineated, with a view to understanding them and demythologising them. Clear examples of the myths in action need to be proffered, with an insight offered as to the way in which they impact upon the

operation and development of the community. Finally, once the research lens has been designed, created and successfully utilised, a future for myth within the community of drama as education has to be identified.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**THE BUILDING BLOCKS**

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The nature of any research problem provokes a search for method; the quest for appropriate, rigorous, reliable and acceptable methodological structures that will give credence to the analysis, findings and conclusions of the researcher. Given the site of this project as described in the first chapter – the intersection of the fields of drama and education, or drama as education as it is known here; and the fundamental supposition of the research – that myths exist in the community of drama as education, it is vital that an innovative and adaptable methodological stance is employed. This chapter will seek to identify the broad thrusts of the research tools as they will be used in this thesis. Once the cornerstones have been set in place, a detailed description of the more specific elements of the methodology, as well as a depiction of its operation will follow in Chapter Four. Prior to all that, the scene needs to be set in terms of the broader fields.

### **Modes of Educational Research**

It is an accepted truism that the manner in which research is conceptualised, and therefore carried out, has undergone seismic change over the course of the last century. From a place where it was comprehensively definable within terms such as empirical, quantitative, scientific, positivistic and conservative, research has travelled a long road mirroring the growth and diversification of study at University level, not to mention the increase in standards of educational achievement and professionalism in the workplace. It has adapted in order to attempt to keep pace with the ever-growing demands for inventiveness and ever-present desires to strive for new truths and beliefs in both fora. The resultant change in research has been characterised by struggle and by lengthy and



sometimes bitter battles to have new ways of learning and understanding accepted.

Nowhere has this tussle been more sharply felt and keenly engaged with that within the field of education. Much of this has to do with the traditionally low status of the field, and its struggle to be recognised as an academic field in its own right, and not just a domain into which people were inducted by way of an apprenticeship or a short training course to serve as classroom practitioners.

Many educationalists were (understandably) guilty of believing that were research in their fledgling field ever to be taken seriously alongside the monolithic giants of academic endeavour in the guise of the 'natural' sciences, then their philosophy and approach must marry those of the sciences with whom they vied for status and resources. Thus research in the 'social' sciences, and education in particular, initially became very concerned with positivist and scientist approaches, and their bedfellows; empiricism, determinism, rationalism, experimentation and the mechanistic gathering of quantitative data.

Difficulties with this approach are readily identifiable:

Positivism's concern for control and, thereby, its appeal to the passivity of behaviourism and for instrumental reason is a serious danger to the more open-ended, creative, humanitarian aspects of social behaviour ... it regards human behaviour as passive, essentially determined and controlled, thereby ignoring intention, individualism and freedom. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000, p.19)

Given that normative understandings of all human behaviour (which lies at the heart of much educational research) are fundamentally flawed, an interpretive paradigm became, and indeed still is, much more prominent within and acceptable to the field. This perspective eschews the assumptions of universality

and the desire for theoretical norms that characterises most positivistic research, and instead ‘... gives way to multifaceted images of human behaviour as varied as the situations and contexts supporting them’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000, p.23). Theory is emergent from the understandings generated in interpreting the lives of individuals and is always grounded in their acts, and this interpretivist paradigm has given rise to vibrant research traditions such as phenomenology, ethnography and symbolic interactionism. However, it is in examining this specificity and groundedness that one of the difficulties of the interpretivist tradition becomes evident. Just as positivistic theories are oriented towards the discovery of provable, universal truths, so are interpretivistic theories concerned with discovering truths at an applied level, and understanding their implications for the human beings engaged in that particular situation.

Problematic in this stance is that ‘they become hermetically sealed from the world outside the participants’ theatre of activity ... and can be criticized for their narrowly micro-sociological persuasion’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000, p.27). Whilst an interpretative approach could certainly be adopted in undertaking research in drama as education, this would not be suitable for the thrust of this thesis, as one of the central tenets of this work is that a discussion needs to take place (demythologising) as to what the underlying macro or orienting theories which are perpetuated by the existing canons of policy, knowledge, tradition and practice.

A third substantive research paradigm evident in writings in the field of education, is that of critical theory, and more specifically critical educational research. The main part of this chapter will be concerned with constructing and

proposing a research model which falls within the paradigm of critical educational research, and with demonstrating why this model can provide a key to helping unlock some of the yet unexplored implications of propounded practice and theory in drama as education. Before that can take place, some attention needs to be paid to exploring the origins, philosophical beliefs, strengths and weakness of the orienting model; critical theory.

### **Origins of Critical Theory**

The *Institut für Sozialforschung* (Institute for Social Research) was set up as an independently endowed research foundation within the University of Frankfurt am Main in 1923, and has become more commonly known as the Frankfurt School. Founded as an institute where research into the labour movement and socialism from a Marxist point of view could take place (Wiggershaus 1994, p.34), the most prominent phase of the early life of the Institute came from 1930 on, under the directorship of Max Horkheimer. He, with fellow researchers Eric Fromm, Friedrich Pollock, Leo Lowenthal, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, developed the School into a site of focussed, collective, interdisciplinary theoretical work that had some continuity of philosophy with the earlier work of the School, but which became increasingly critical of ineffective and institutionalised forms of orthodox Marxism, such as dialectic materialism, which asserted the primacy of matter over consciousness, and propounded that social history and experience defined both history and consciousness. A broad definition of the Institute's new site of theoretical focus emanated from Horkheimer's inaugural speech in 1931 where he spoke of

developing a critical theory that, ‘takes society as its object, and that attempts to transcend the tensions between individual spontaneity and the work-process relationships on which society is based’ (Macey 2000, p.75). Wolin goes somewhat further in describing the task facing critical theory at that early stage in its conception as being twofold:

- 1) (T)o account for the psychological /cultural integration of the proletariat under changed historical circumstances, an effort which resulted in a revision, profoundly indebted to Freud, of the reification thesis of *History and Class Consciousness*; and 2) the attempt to salvage a normative foundation for theory, critique, and the praxis of an “imaginary future witness,” in the light of the obsolescence of Marx’s theory of the proletariat as a “universal class.” (Wolin 1992, p.25)

The existence of the Frankfurt School came under serious threat with the rise in popularity of Nationalism Socialism in Germany, and the eventual dominance of the Nazi Party in the 1930’s. Given that the research team were obviously left-wing, and mainly Jewish, a move followed, initially to Switzerland in 1933, and from there to Columbia University in the United States. Eventually the School was in a position to relocate to Germany after the war (1950), and this was followed by Adorno’s succession to Horkheimer as Director in 1958.

Throughout all of this somewhat tumultuous existence, the concept of critical theory gained credence in scholarly circles, but also, and quite naturally, went through a process of distillation, and further definition, as well as no small amount of disagreement both within the School, and from external sources. However, given all that, certain characteristics and trends of what would form a strong future research paradigm became clear from the early decades of the Frankfurt School. Critical theory would be an emancipatory tradition, concerned not with the formation of ideology or theory, but with understanding them, and

enabling people to understand the forces that shape and change their lives, with a view to allowing them to change them, should they so wish. It would be inherently cognitive, consciously self-critical, unquestionably analytical and fundamentally geared towards the illumination of the way towards transformation, without necessarily leading the way into it. For the purposes of this thesis, a detailed analysis of the evolution and various historiographical understandings of critical theory is neither possible nor indeed desirable – a more detailed discussion of the nature of critical educational research and its centrality to this work follows below. However, Macey's broad definition of the critical theory nicely encapsulates its dominant function:

The goal of critical theory is to preclude the emergence of [an 'administered' and ideologically controlling] society by demonstrating that a transition to a freer and more fulfilling society is objectively or theoretically possible, and then by demonstrating that the existing state of society is so unsatisfactory and frustrating that it *ought* to be transformed. Determinism is avoided by adding the important proviso that the transformation can come about only if social agents can accept the theses of critical theory as a form of self-consciousness that can act as a guide to emancipatory action. (2000, pp.75-76)

One of the most prominent contemporary theorists of the second phase and the more recent work of the Frankfurt School is Jürgen Habermas (1929- ), and in essence it is in his work that the links between the decidedly and purposely esoteric traditions of the School, and the more grounded necessities of the field of education, lie. Habermas has written widely, but it is perhaps his volume Knowledge and Human Interests (1972) that holds most relevance for epistemological questions within education and therefore critical educational research. Morrison suggests that:

(Habermas') critical theory suggests an educational agenda, and also has its own methodologies, in particular ideology critique and action research ... Ideology critique is designed to expose the operation of ideology in

many spheres of society and education and the working out of vested interests under the mantle of the general good, which may be occurring consciously or subliminally, revealing to the participants a system which keeps them empowered or disempowered, i.e. which suppresses a generalizable interest. Situations are not natural but are the outcomes or processes wherein interests and powers are protected and suppressed, and the one task of ideology critique is to expose this. (2001, p.216)

Habermas's concept of ideology critique involves a four-stage process that is importantly not only in theoretical terms but also suggests a direct link with practice. Ideology critique is transformative in function and because transformation always threatens the status quo, it involves, according to Morrison, conceptualising knowledge as being a non-neutral entity which 'is determined by the social and positional power of the advocates of that knowledge, i.e. communities of scholars (2001, p.217). Habermas' epistemological model revolves around three cognitive interests, which shall be examined in greater detail at a later stage.

In looking at the contemporary tradition, Kincheloe and McLaren (2000, pp. 279-313) describe critical research as rapidly changing and evolving, given the changes in information and technology evident in society over the last half-century. They suggest that the 'post-discourses' of postmodernism, critical feminism and poststructuralism, are the most relevant in understanding the individual's view of themselves, and a world which is more subject to forces of power, knowledge and influence than ever previously believed. In describing their map of the areas in which critical research can be influential, the list of the headings they employ is informative in describing the breath and explaining the relevance of the contemporary tradition of critical research: Critical Enlightenment; The rejection of economic determinism; The critique of

instrumental or technical rationality; The impact of desire; A reconceptualised critical theory of power; Hegemony; A reconceptualised critical theory of power: ideology; A reconceptualised critical theory of power- linguistic/discursive power; Focussing on the relationships among culture, power, and domination; The role of cultural pedagogy in critical theory.

The idea of ideology critique is now firmly grounded within mainstream educational research, and can be clearly seen in the critical pedagogy propounded by eminent figures in the research discourse of the community. However, it will be argued that the extent to which critical theory, particularly in the form of ideology critique has been applied in the community of drama as education is minimal. It is the intention of this project to make a contribution to the tentative beginnings of that tradition.

### **Critical Theory in Education**

The primary intent in employing critical theory in education is immediately evident on considering the situation of schools as loci for so many potentially powerful influences:

Critical theory addresses the relations among schooling, education, culture, society, economy, and governance. The critical project in education proceeds from the assumption that pedagogical practices are related to social practices, and that it the task of the critical intellectual to identify and address injustices in these practices. (Popkewitz & Fendler 1999, p.xiii)

Critical studies in education centred on the basic premise of ideology critique (which with time has shifted away from simply the critique of ideology, to a

broader critique of a plethora of power-related issues) have become more numerous over the last two decades. The work of Apple (1982, 1990, 2000, 2003), Giroux (1981, 2000), Giroux and McLaren (1989, 1994), Popkewitz (1984, 1999) and Popkewitz *et al* (1998, 1999, 2001) have led to this tradition becoming core to educational research, and have charted the fast-paced evolution of critical research in attempting to deal with the radical changes facing educational systems around the world.

Fundamental to critical research in education, as in other fields, is the premise that education does not stand alone in splendid isolation from political or cultural influence, or does not adopt what Carspecken and Apple describe as, ‘a neutral instrumentality somehow above the ideological conflicts of the society’ (1992, p.509). Popkewitz (1999) suggests that the critical traditions in education can be conceptualised as a room of a variety of groups of people. Taking up most space in the room (but all at one end) is the group he labels as ‘pragmatic-empirists’, who believe social progress can be achieved through the realisation of ‘useful knowledge’, but who are essentially concerned with measurement and the collection of data. To them, being critical implies a wide variety of meanings centred around what Popkewitz describes as, ‘a form of academic wordplay that promotes a kind of soliphistic navel-gazing rather than serious intellectual work’ (1999, p.2). At the far end of the room are the critical researchers, who are concerned with the interrogation of social relations evident in schools and education with a view to understanding inequalities and improving education practice. Cohen, Manion and Morrison note that the implications of a researcher



stance like this are far-reaching, insofar as critical researchers instinctively claim superiority to other forms of research:

The significance of critical theory for research is immense, for it suggests that much social research is comparatively trivial in that it accepts rather than questions given agendas for research. ... Critical theorists would argue that the positivist and interpretative paradigms are essentially technicist, seeking to understand and render more efficient an existing situation, rather than to question or transform it. (2000, pp.28-29)

In terms of the practice of critical research in education, the growth in action research and the development of a critical pedagogy, more so than the practice of ideology critique, has received most attention. This is understandable given the necessary centrality of the practitioner to the work, and the relevance of this for classroom-based researchers particularly.

Returning to Habermas, his understanding of ideology critique has dominated the emergent tradition. It is centred around the 'suppression of generalizable interests' (Habermas 1976, cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000, p.30), an indefensible and yet real situation where systems, groups and individuals maintain power within fields and societies by means of the disempowerment of others. The ideologies (essentially the codified values and practices) of the dominant system are legitimated by, and perpetuated through educational systems and elsewhere in order to maintain power. Ideology critique, therefore, concerns itself with the exposition of vested interests in order to expose and explore power structures, for the general good:

The study of the interconnections between ideology and curriculum and between ideology and educational argumentation has important implications for the curriculum field and for educational theory and policy in general. ... (W)e need to examine critically not just 'how a student acquires more knowledge' (the dominant question in our efficiency minded field), but 'why and how the particular aspects of the

collective culture are presented in school as objective, factual knowledge.’ How, *concretely*, may the official knowledge represent ideological configurations of the dominant interests in a society? How do schools legitimate these limited and partial standards of knowing as unquestioned truths? (Apple 1990, p.14)

Criticisms of the critical tradition in education are numerous. Some writers choose not to acknowledge the critical tradition, insisting instead the way forward for educational research calls for the dichotomy between positivism and interpretivism to be bridged (Rowbottom & Aiston 2006). Others choose to ignore the findings of critically oriented research. Cochran-Smith (2006) suggests that once the way in which the ideological basis of social practice is identified through critical educational research, then it follows that all debates about reform within that system need to address the choices about ideology and values entailed in any change to the system. Contrastingly, she identifies a contemporary trend with the United States where those engaged in reform have asserted their positions as ‘neutral, apolitical, and value free, based solely on empirical evidence and not embedded within or related to particular agendas that are both political and ideological’ (Cochran-Smith 2006, p.40). Indeed, she suggests that the term ideological is used as a combative and derogative term to undermine and dismiss positions competing with one’s own. An entirely different problem of significance to this work is charted by Deegan (2004), who notes that the critical traditions have not figured significantly at all in Irish educational discourse.

Debates of various aspects of the critical tradition also abound. Ward (1995) suggests that critical theory might not be in a position to provide the intellectual resources for a reconstruction of educational science. He critiques the critical

tradition in terms of its reactions to positivism and interpretivist Marxist thinking, and suggests that what is particularly unique in the critical tradition is the recognition that, 'the more individuals understand of the social determinants of their actions the more likely they are to escape from the ideological constraints to which they were previously subject' (p.113). The difficulty for Ward is that he notes that the critical tradition has not yet clearly articulated a philosophical position whereby the practical role of self-reflection and conscious human agency are recognised and the rational empowerment of individuals made an explicit objective. Masschelein (2004) further problematises this and other arguments, and proposes that a new critical educational theory is needed. This theory would incorporate, *inter alia*, more detail on concepts such as autonomy, critical education and emancipation, as well as acknowledging that the history of education and educational theory is not simply to be dismissed as the 'history of a questionable and dubious 'science' on its way to becoming 'normal' and acceptable, but is at the same time part of a history, in which people conduct and govern others and themselves in the light of particular truth games' (Masschelein 2004, p.362).

The emancipatory intent of ideology critique and the centrality of human agency to the model are recurring issues, particularly the difficulty in establishing whether people can become emancipated through the process of ideology critique. Also problematic, as shall be seen presently, is the epistemological question, with different understandings purported as to the nature of knowledge, and how it comes about. Another issue of importance, as sign-posted by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000, p.32) is the dilemma of objectivity that is arguably

posed by ideology critique, whereby researchers engaging in this sort of research, cannot, by definition, avoid acting in an ideological fashion.

### **Towards a Methodology**

Given the assertion at the heart of this research – that myths exist in drama as education, and that in order to understand them one must look to ideas of language, power/politics and ideology – a critical approach to discussing the research question is the only viable methodological choice. But it is also worth noting that the development of critical theory also deeply influenced the formulation of the research question. That is, without the growing influence of critical educational research, the fundamental premise upon which this work is based would not have arisen. It is, however, the developing tradition of ideology critique that shall be focussed upon and understood in this thesis as critical research, given its relevance and appropriateness to the aim of this project.

The challenge for this work now is to describe and defend the specific brand of ideology critique proposed here. One of the difficulties faced with a young and constantly evolving tradition such as critical educational theory is that the ground is relatively un-firm, and the paths to be followed in crossing the ground are not well marked. Add to that the difficulty of critiquing ideology in a young and still evolving community such as drama as education with its relatively brief research tradition and regular bouts of identity crisis. This section seeks to answer some pertinent questions: Why is it useful or necessary to use ideology critique in drama as education? i.e. why has ideology critique been chosen as the primary

orienting theory for this research? What examples of a critical research tradition in drama as education can be cited? What is the challenge (within the tradition of critical theory) in defining the methodological stance? What is the imperative for constructing a new way in employing ideology critique?

Turning to the first of these and as noted in Chapter One, drama as an educational pursuit is a relatively new idea. From initial developments primarily in the United Kingdom in the early and mid twentieth-century, growth has taken place to the extent that an international community of drama as education can be readily identified. That is not to say that it is unified. As alluded to in the previous chapter, the choice of nomenclature for this work (i.e. drama as education) is an attempt to encompass the broad and disparate range of disciplines and practices that now exist internationally. A detailed rationale as to whether drama as education comprises a field or community, and how they can be identified will take place in Chapter Three.

From the beginning of a formal research tradition in drama as education, a discernible call<sup>ii</sup> has been made to those who work within the field/community that they need to look further afield in terms of explaining/justifying /defending/linking their praxis<sup>iii</sup> with that of broader educational, artistic and academic spheres (cf. Balin 1996, Somers 1996, Taylor 1996, Saxton & Miller 1998). The case that is made can be classified as consisting of three core arguments. First is the category of **praxis-driven research**. This suggests a

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<sup>ii</sup> Many examples of this call to expand the theoretical base are in the oral rhetoric of the field and community, often as part of conference keynotes, workshops, etc.

<sup>iii</sup> Praxis is a term attributed to Friere (1996). He understands it as the synthesis of practice and reflection.

theoretical looking outwards is necessary to allow practitioners in drama as education to better understand, contextualise and ultimately improve their own praxis. **Advocacy orientated research** propounds a firmer basis in ‘acceptable’ research and theory for drama within an educational context will allow those who work in the community to better defend the case for drama as education and improve its status, resources, etc. Finally, **bridge-building research** proposes that a better understanding of the nature, form and function of drama as education can help to transcend some of the dichotomous positions that have arisen between various parties within drama as education, but also between drama as education and the broader fields of drama and education, thus helping to unify the varying traditions.

With regard to the first, it is fair to say that over the last decade there seems to have been general agreement that it is not only important, but imperative, that research in drama as education begins to look outwards to better define what it does, and much effort has been expended in this regard. However, this looking outward, whilst expansive in comparison with predecessors, tends not to wander far beyond the walls of the classroom or school. Quite an amount has been achieved with a raft of important publications, including amongst others:

Ackroyd & Pilkington (1997a, 1997b), Wagner (1998, 1999), Winston (1998, 2000) Toye & Prendiville (2000), Grady (2000), Gallagher (2001, 2007), Kempe (2004), Kempe & Holroyd (2004), Dickinson *et al* (2006), Carroll *et al* (2006).

Each of these works has contributed in broadening understandings of the educative role of drama by further clarifying the relationship between it and multiculturalism, identity, language arts, narrative, moral education, traditional

story, diversity, the education of girls, urban education, special needs, speaking and listening, whole school development and technology.

In terms of advocacy orientated research, the need for such has been clearly identified. As noted in the previous chapter, Berry (2000) suggests that the dramatic arts and education are actually in crisis, and that the restrictions of our modern world are in need of unpacking in order to provide a viable place for the dramatic arts in schools. She issues a clarion call to the community to seek out new directions in research that will clearly pin down and justify the place of drama in formal education. Much work has been done for the purposes of advocacy at more informal levels, but there are few enough substantive contemporary academic texts that powerfully argue the case for drama<sup>iv</sup>, and fewer still that engage in the sort of traditional quantitative empirical and positivist research that holds symbolic power in both policy-making and academic circles. The question as to why that is the case is worth posing. Some of the reason can be put down to the relative youth and smallness of the community, and the gradual emergence from the undeniably insular mentality that had existed. Another reason is a still extant fear on the part of researchers in drama as education of not being understood in an educational research world that is somewhat reluctant in broadening its own research paradigms. Courtney identified this phenomenon, and the problems associated with it, some time ago:

Unfortunately, arts researchers have not always led in developing new styles of inquiry. This may be due, at least in part, to the continual need to justify the place of the arts in schools and to persuade some parents and

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<sup>iv</sup> It can be held that the work of Gavin Bolton (1980, 1984, 1992) and Richard Courtney (1974, 1980, 1982, 1990) - particularly the latter who adopted a cognitive psychology approach in much of his writing, sought to establish an intellectual tradition making the case for and defending drama as education. Regardless of the reliability or efficacy of their work, neither of these theorists are regarded here as belonging to a contemporary tradition of drama as education.

taxpayers that these are not “frills”. As a result, studies have often been framed in conservative styles in order to demonstrate the respectability of arts education. (1987, p.60)

Another reason is that theoretical or scholarly research was felt by some to have relatively little place in a community that is primarily concerned with the development of informed praxis. However, as Schwandt notes, this fear is misplaced and restrictive:

(T)he practice of social inquiry cannot be adequately defined as an atheoretical making that requires only methodological prowess. Social inquiry is a distinctive praxis, a kind of activity (like teaching) that in doing transforms the very theory and aims that guide it. In other words, as one engages in the “practical” activities of generating and interpreting data to answer questions about the meaning of what others are doing and saying and then transforming that understanding into public knowledge, one inevitably takes up “theoretical” concerns about what constitutes knowledge and how it is to be justified, about the nature and aim of social theorizing, and so forth. (2000, pp.190-191)

For better or worse, drama as education has steadfastly resisted the urge to embrace a scientist or even quasi-scientist perspective, regardless of the realisation that it may be a necessary evil in terms of advocacy. Henry (2000), Anderson (2004) and Wright (2006) are notable exceptions with their work on learning paradigms, cognitive processes and personal development respectively.

Whilst Berry’s (2000) call to arms has certainly been heeded to the extent that there has been a proliferation of graduate research and publications, there is a certain irony in the fact that the direction research has taken over the last decade has been in pushing out the boundaries of drama as education as opposed to consolidating some of the more traditional ideas of praxis. This has arguably resulted in further distilling and expanding some of the values of the drama in education movement, whilst allowing the expansion into areas such as applied



theatre, theatre studies, performance studies and theatre for young audiences. However this movement outwards has contributed significantly toward developing a corpus of research that is bridge-building. As will be seen presently in the work of Hornbrook, one of the difficulties in the development of the community of drama as education has been the perceived dichotomies that have arisen between it and drama that is associated with forms of performance. A tentative move towards closing that gap can be seen in the work of O'Toole (1992), Neelands (1994, 2004, 2007a, 2007b), O'Neill (1995a) and Bolton (1998) who all strive to link their praxis in drama classrooms with ideas more commonly associated with drama in performance and theatre. More explicit links have been established in the work of Fleming (2001), Gallagher & Booth (2003), and Ackroyd (2004), each in a different way. The lateral movement noted above into performance, applied theatre and other associated areas is well represented in research with books by Thompson (2003), Taylor (2003) and Nicholson (2005), amongst other studies.

In discerning identifiable trends, a few things are clear from the discussion above. The traditional 'core' function of research in drama as education of examining its context with a view to the development of praxis, remains strong and popular. Substantial audience demand exists from both experienced and neophyte practitioners, and this clearly drives this market; along with a deep-rooted conviction in the community that research which speaks directly to praxis is still most necessary and important. The emergent movement towards what has here been termed bridge-building research is equally as vibrant and in demand from an audience whose ways of working in drama as education are becoming

more diverse and multifaceted. All of the work published under these roughly-hewn categories contributes of course to the theoretical base of drama as education, and informs in the most valuable and pragmatic manner the way in which the community operates on a daily basis. The level of activity under the advocacy category is minimal – this is interesting in that it can be interpreted as representing an ideological choice on the part of members not to engage with this type of work, regardless of the high levels of acceptance studies of this nature may have within the mainstream of educational research. It can also be seen to indicate the lack of external interest in the study of drama as education from both researchers in both the theatre and education fields.

What is clearly also not developing in any substantial way is the area of research that this thesis feels to be most essential – critical research that seeks to inform the development of the community at a most fundamental theoretical and philosophical level. Some work has tentatively probed questions that can be regarded as being within the remit of ideology critique. Doyle's book (1993) was amongst the earliest of these. In addressing the potential of drama as a site for a critical pedagogy, he identifies the dearth of a critical tradition in drama as education, alludes to certain unquestioned beliefs, and suggests that the lack of a critical tradition does not serve the possibilities of drama as education well:

Drama has a long and ambiguous history in education. Drama within the process of schooling, has its own philosophies, aims and practices. To help redeem drama education from the constraining powers of absolute definitions of knowledge and activities it will be necessary to examine its philosophies, aims and practices from a critical perspective. It will also be necessary to probe the relationship between drama and society. Only within that relationship can the role of drama be seen as a transformative force (Doyle 1993, p.31)

However, Doyle's rhetoric of engaging in a critical examination of philosophies, aims and practices flatters to deceive, and ultimately has to be understood within the North American context within which it was produced. The author is unashamed in holding the perspective that drama should itself be a critical force for transformation, as opposed to simply having a praxis based upon ideals of dramatic texts, performance and history, as is the dominant tradition in the US. To that end, Doyle's work is primarily focussed upon the ideal of giving students 'the opportunity to examine the real significance of their shared knowledge for the ingredients of status, power, and privilege that contaminate it' (1993, p.147). It is therefore more suited to the category of advocacy orientated research suggested above. That said, it still represents a substantive engagement with the critical tradition.

Others have engaged to a lesser degree, most notably Ackroyd (2000) and Neelands (2007a,) in discussing the evolving discipline of applied theatre, Styslinger (2000) in examining power relations in the drama classroom, and Kempe (2003) in discussing drama in the teaching of speaking and learning, and their relationship to social capital. Perhaps the clearest identification of the necessity in moving towards an embracing of the critical tradition comes from Neelands (2004), who suggests the time is ripe for the western tradition of drama as education to move beyond what he terms the rhetoric of transformation.

And so to the challenge at hand in engaging in ideology critique within drama as education. The lack of a strong established critical tradition is obviously a potential difficulty, given that a range of established and honed methodological

approaches are not available to this project as they might be elsewhere. Much of the coming text will deal with the construction of a flexible yet rigorous research lens that will stand this work in good stead. Another potential difficulty in choosing this direction is the possible human and political resistance that may exist to an exploration/critique of this nature, and indeed its findings, from within the community. This may have a detrimental impact on the efficacy of the work insofar as it may be a factor in reducing the potential readership of the research, thereby compromising its ability to communicate potential findings.

### **Constructing a Contemporary Research Methodology for Drama as Education – Working as *Bricoleur***

Bricoleurs are obsessed with recovering meanings about the physical, social, political, psychological, and educational worlds that have been lost, that have fallen through the disciplinary cracks of modernism. Such losses are especially severe in the domains of the ecological, the emotional, the unconscious, the ideological, and the cultural, as many research orientations are simply not prepared to produce knowledge within these areas. Such research orientations have a history of focussing on inert material that no longer lives in various processes and contexts. (Kincheloe & Berry 2004, p.89)

Denzin & Lincoln (2000, p.4) characterise the qualitative researcher as a *bricoleur* and quilt maker, who uses the aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods or empirical materials are at hand. The term originates from the work Lévi-Strauss. If the task at hand requires the *bricoleur* to invent or piece together new tools or techniques in order to create the montage required by the research question, then the researcher must do this. The choices of which practices to employ are not necessarily set in advance, and change as the task at hand changes before their eyes. The construction of a *bricolage* depends entirely on the question and the context.

Tapping into the evolving tradition of ideology critique in the field of education, and continuing in the fundamental and ever-evolving modes of critical theory, this thesis demands the construction of a specific research lens to help identify and understand the myths it is claimed exist in drama as education. This lens needs to be adaptable enough to hold a critical understanding of the nature and function of these myths, as well as broad enough to contain a mechanism that suggests the forces that create, drive and perpetuate myths. Finally the methodology should describe if and how myths can be demythologised. Given the disparate range of functions demanded of the research methodology, the creation of a *bricolage* is required.

Over the following sections of this chapter, what will be described are a range of macro theoretical approaches that will inform the construction of the *bricolage*, particularly with regard to an understanding of the nature of myth, the nature of mythic knowledge and the fundamental purpose of engaging in the identification of myth, and ultimately demythologising.

### **Myth, Knowledge & Power – Barthes**

To teach or even to speak outside the limits of institutional sanction is certainly not to be rightfully and totally uncorrupted by power; power (the *libido dominandi*) is there, hidden in any discourse, even when uttered in a place outside the bounds of power. Therefore, the freer such teaching, the further we must inquire into the conditions and processes by which discourse can be disengaged from all will-to-possess. *Roland Barthes – Inaugural Lecture to the Collège de France, 1977* (Sontag 2000, p.459)

Roland Barthes (1915-1980) is widely acknowledged as one of the most important critics of the twentieth century, and an innovative and inventive contributor to semiotic structuralism and the modernist movement in general. In all of Barthes' prolific writings, perhaps the most seminal is Mythologies, a collection of essays regarded as being the mark of his move towards semiotics. First published in 1957, this volume, and most notably the critical essay entitled 'Myth Today', arguably does most to expound upon Barthes' life-long '...fundamental concern (...) with the relationship between language and the social world, and with the literary forms that mediate between the two' (Macey 2000, p.29).

Semiotics/Semiology (the formal study of signs) was for Barthes an attempt to linguistically understand the great signifying units of discourse – why and how discourse can help us to understand society, and social structures in particular. Barthes' understanding diversified and moved beyond the linguistic and incorporated images, sounds, gestures in an attempt to create a structured and logical grand theory of interpretation (1964). Language is of importance to this project and it is central to understanding Barthes's attempts to decipher and interrogate meaning, and ultimately the canon, through myth. His relevance for this work is not only in linguistic terms, but perhaps more importantly in terms of presenting the most substantive critical approach to myth available.

### **A Mythic Semiological System**

Barthes clarifies very early on in 'Myth Today' that although dealing in the realm of language, his opening sentence assertion that myth is a type of language is made in such a way that myth is to be conceptualised as a thing, and not simply a word, of which there are innumerable other meanings (1972, p.109).

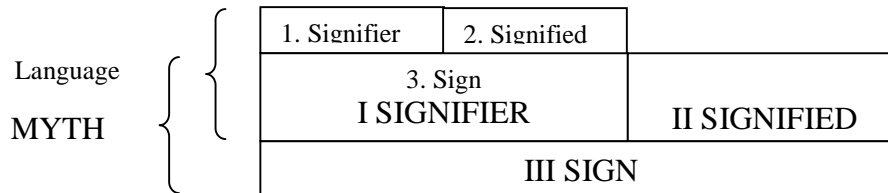
Language is much more than the simple content of a speech-act: it is a multifaceted and multidimensional object or event that at times, defies definition.

Myth is seen as being equally so, but eminently more powerful than language:

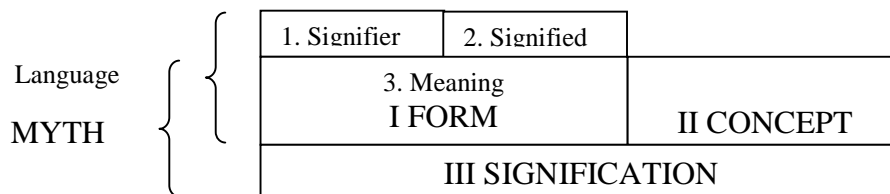
Myths ... abound in the fabric of any society. Their attraction is not due to their actual content but to the glitter of their surface, and this glitter in turn owes its brilliance to the gratuity, the lack of semantic responsibility, of the fictional sign. This play is far from innocent. It is in the nature of fictions to be more persuasive than facts, and especially persuasive in seeming more "real" than nature itself. Their order, their coherence, their symmetry is possible, because they are accountable only to themselves, yet these are precisely the qualities wistfully associated with the world of nature and necessity. As a result, the most superfluous of gestures are most likely to become the hardest to do without. Their very artificiality endows them with a maximum of natural appeal. Fictions or myths are addictive because they substitute for natural needs by being more natural than the nature they displace. (De Man 1990, p.183)

Building upon this understanding of language, Barthes proceeds to present myth as a complex second-order semiological system that utilises what he describes as 'mere language' (1972, p.114) as its *signifier*. This 'mere language' is the *sign* of the first-order semiological system (see Fig. 2.1 below), and Barthes notes that '(w)e must here recall that the materials of mythical speech (the language itself, photography, painting, posters, rituals, objects, etc.), however different at the start, are reduced to a pure signifying function as soon as they are caught by myth' (1972, p.114).

He introduces specific terminology to allow myth to be dealt with and to avoid confusion with the first-order semiological system. These parallel terms are detailed in Figure 2.2.



**Figure 2.1 Myth as a Semiological System  
(Reproduced from Barthes 1972, p.115)**



**Figure 2.2 Myth as a Semiological System  
(Adapted from Barthes 1972, p.115)**

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Barthes suggests that it is particularly in the ‘constant game of hide-and-seek between the *meaning* and the *form* which defines myth’ (1972, p.118); i.e. in the space where language as meaning ends, and language as the form for myth begins. He suggests that myth allows *form* to impoverish *meaning*, and essentially push it to arm’s length. When *meaning* becomes *form* in the mythic system, it loses its value, but retains its essential shape from which the *form* of myth draws life – it is vital that the *form* continues to be closely aligned with the *meaning*, because the parasitical relationship with the linguistic *sign* allows the mythical *signifier* to draw ‘what nature it needs for its nutriment; above all, it must be able to hide there’ (1972, p.118).



The *concept* of the mythic system is of less import than the *form*, and yet is perhaps of most value to the mythologist (1972, p.120). It absorbs the history that is drained out of the *form*, and unlike the *form*, it is in no way abstract, but concrete and filled with situation, intention and determination. Quantitatively, the *concept* is not as substantial as the *form*, yet Barthes stresses 'this open character of the concept; it is not at all an abstract, purified essence; it is a formless, unstable, nebulous condensation, whose unity and coherence are above all due to its function' (1972, p.119). The mythical *signified* that is the *concept* can have at its disposal many *forms* and still remain constant. This is essentially its value as the multitude of *forms* encountered each allow the mythologist a different way of entry in terms of deciphering the myth. And given the fundamental instability of myths that Barthes notes (mainly due to their historical and ultimately manipulative nature), this is of vital importance.

As in semiology (with regard to the concept of *sign*), the *signification* in myth is the myth itself in its fullest possible shape. The *signification* allows the association of the *form* and the *concept* to be seen clearly, all the while maintaining the visibility of both. Unlike in the linguistic brand, the mythic semiological system chooses to be open: indeed in creating a *signification*, 'myth hides nothing: its function is to distort, not to make disappear' (1972, p.171).

Barthes sums up the nature of the *signification* by noting that:

(it) is constituted by a sort of constantly moving turnstile which presents alternately the meaning of the signifier and the form, a language-object and a metalanguage, a purely signifying and a purely imagining consciousness. This alteration is, so to speak, gathered up in the concept, which uses it like an ambiguous signifier, at once intellectual and imaginary, arbitrary and natural. (1972, p.123)

The *signification*, therefore, can be seen as a complex, yet simple product of a system designed to manipulate in a non-arbitrary fashion. A mythic semiological system can only begin to be understood, therefore, in terms of its motivation.

### **Understanding & Deciphering a Mythic Semiological System**

In describing the *signification*, Barthes begins a useful discussion of the motivation involved by noting that it is completely necessary to the duplicity of myth; indeed as already noted, myth plays on the analogy and in the liminal space between *meaning* and *form*, and cannot actually exist without motivated *form* (1972, p.126). The motivation involved is always constructed (not natural) and prefers to work with an incomplete image lacking *meaning* (a complete *meaning* would exclude myth as it is too full), and the motivation then given is only one chosen from amongst many possibilities. Myths exist, 'where the forms are still motivated by the concept which they represent while not yet, by a long way, covering the sum of its possibilities for representation' (1972, p.127). The idea of a motivation rooted in the *concept* taking advantage of an incomplete image contained in a less than certain *meaning* which becomes the *form*, brings us to some understanding of why Barthes considers the *signification* to represent the essence of the myth itself. In terms of the mechanics of myth, working towards an understanding of the motivations involved is key to deciphering the actual myth itself.

In his essay section entitled 'Reading and deciphering myth' (1975, p.128), Barthes succinctly presents three straightforward options in terms of categorising those who understand mythic semiological systems:

1) Focussing on the empty *signifier* and allowing the *concept* to fill the *form* of the myth results in the creation of a literal *signification*, and thus this behaviour is that if the initiator of the myth – someone who begins with a *concept* and seeks a *form* to carry it. An example might be Hitler as the initiator of a myth, who in seeking to further the *concept* of the final solution, chose to employ the *form* of Aryan supremacy as a means of doing so.

2) Focussing on a full *signifier* entails quite a different stance on the part of those who encounter the *signification*; that of a mythologist who is intent on deciphering the myth. In this case, the *meaning* and *form* are clearly distinguishable from each other, thus allowing the distortion of one upon the other to become quite evident. An example of this category would be this work, in that it seeks to differentiate between the *sign* of drama as education (its discourse), which is also the *meaning* in Barthes' second-order semiological system, and the *form* of myths in drama as education: i.e. it hopes to distinguish myth from discourse.

3) Barthes' final category is that of the reader who focuses on the mythical *signifier* as a single category – the *meaning* and *form* are inextricable from each other, resulting in an ambiguous *signification*. This is the position of the reader of myths – a consumer of myths who is also critically informed of the mythic

nature of their consumption, but continues to willingly consume the myth in the knowledge that it is vital to their particular societal pursuit. The intent of this work is that it would allow members of the community of drama as education to become readers of myth.

The importance of these categories becomes obvious once Barthes moves the idea of myth away from semiology towards ideology, and suggests that if one wishes to begin a process of linking myth to general histories, something which is highly desirable given the overall thrust of this thesis, then he holds that is it the third position which one must seek to obtain:

The first two types of focusing are static, analytical; they destroy the myth, either by making its intention obvious, or by unmasking it: the former is cynical, the latter demystifying. The third type of focussing is dynamic, it consumes the myth according to the very ends built into its structure: the reader lives the myth as a story once true and unreal. (1972, p.128)

And yet to the reader of myths armed with this knowledge, there are dangers evident. The nature of myth is such that it will not succumb to reading in such a simplistic manner – myth is too complex to allow itself to be either too obscure, thus rendering it impotent, or too obvious to be believed. Myth will always find a way out if ‘driven to having to unveil or liquidate the concept, it will *naturalize* it’ (1972, p.129). Thus Barthes brings us to encounter the single most defining characteristic of myth, and its particular relevance for a study engaged in examining aspects of culture or society – that ‘(myth) transforms history into nature’ (1975, p.129).

The argument that will be made in considering myths in drama as education is that it is the second position that needs to be adopted in this work – that of mythologist. The reason for this is straightforward – there has not been sufficient recognition of myths, or excavation of the *concepts* driving myths in order to allow the consumers of myth to become fully informed readers of myth.

### **A Contemporary place for Barthes' Myth**

In the final sections of 'Myth Today', Barthes engages in a discussion regarding the possible applications of myth in society. In order to achieve this, he initially delineates between two approaches: the diachronic (focussed on changes in linguistic systems over a period of time) studies of historical myths; or the path he chooses to engage in, 'a synchronic sketch of contemporary myths' (1972, p.137), which looks at a linguistic system at a singular point in time. In following this approach, he briefly traces the remnants of bourgeois ideology extant in 1957 France from the original attempt to rid France of the bourgeoisie in 1789. This brief discussion is salient especially because of the clear manner in which it concretely moves the idea of myth away from the previously established linguistic and semiological context to a more sociological frame. He notes the controlling influence and position of the bourgeoisie, despite the small matter of revolution:

... The flight from the name 'bourgeois' is not therefore an illusory, accidental, secondary, natural or insignificant phenomenon: it is the bourgeois ideology itself, the process through which the bourgeoisie transforms the reality of the world into an image of the world, History into Nature. (Barthes 1972, p.140-141)

In this statement one can realise the core of Barthes' thesis, which suggests that bourgeois ideology remains dominant by becoming invisible ('myth is depoliticised speech' (1972, p.143)), through a mythic process of transformation and normalisation. These ideas of myth as depoliticised speech and ideology as a mask for covert political interests, provide core tenets for ideology critique in cultural studies and education, as well as essential tools in beginning to demythologising.

Barthes is, of course, not without his critics. Post-modernity has shrugged aside much of what it considers the narrowing structures of a structuralist approach, particularly in linguistics. It chooses to see the world as unanswerable through scientific classification of the sort proposed by Barthes:

The perfect convergence between Barthes's social criticism, including the criticism of academic traditionalism, and the means used in accomplishing this highly desirable aim engenders its own mystification, this time on the level of method rather than of substance. The very power of the instrument used creates an overconfidence that generates its own set of counterquestions. In this case, the questions have to do with the claim of having finally grounded the study of literature in foundations epistemologically strong enough to be called scientific. (De Man 1990, p.184)

De Man continues by acknowledging that literature is of course open to ideological manipulation but also argues the case for interpretation, and questions the legitimacy of a structuralist semiological system in a world where the text is so far removed from the controller, who is no longer able to control his/her own discourse. Despite the inadequacies that De Man feels has been uncovered, particularly by contemporary philosophy, he notes there is a recognition of the boundaries and horizons in Barthes' work, and given that, there is a distinct place for it in critical studies:

To return to an unproblematic notion of signification is to take two steps backward, a step backward into a pseudo-science in a domain in which no science is possible, and a step backward into a pseudo-science that, unlike Barthes's semiology, is too remote from its object to be demystified by it. (1990, p.190)

The distinct place of Barthes' work in the construction of this *bricolage* will be considered presently.

### **Knowledge, Society & Emancipation - Habermas**

Jürgen Habermas' contribution to twentieth century philosophy is assured, and there are several overt links between his contributions over the last half-century and educational thinking (Morrison, 2001). As noted, his connection with the development of ideology critique and critical theory as the leading contemporary figure of the Frankfurt School is important in justifying the critical approach taken in this work. No less importantly, Habermas' early work on a critical theory of epistemology will serve to aid the construction of the critical mythic *bricolage*. His theories of communicative action will also be briefly examined, as it provides a useful model for considering the educative process. His understanding of a normative universalism is also of relevance to the work.

### **A Theory of Epistemology**

Habermas (1972) presents a complex and comprehensive analysis of the nature of knowledge, fundamentally premised upon the idea that knowledge can only be understood in terms of its relationship with society. This is in contrast with the predominantly scientivistic and inherently positivistic understandings of

knowledge that then, and arguably still, abound. The majority of the work has a strong Germanic historical bent, and it goes into great detail in presenting an analysis of the influence of Kant, Marx, Hegel and Peirce amongst others in examining what Habermas refers to as the, ‘abandoned stages of reflection’ (1972, p.vii). At the heart of this analysis is what Habermas believes to be failure on the part of these eminent theorists to radicalise the epistemological project through their metacritiques of knowledge systems.

From that platform of analysis, he presents as his core thesis a theory of cognitive interests that has the intention of doing exactly what his predecessors have failed in. McCarthy explains the function of the theory:

His theory of cognitive interests is an attempt to radicalize epistemology by unearthing the roots of knowledge in life. It is his central thesis that “the specific points from which we apprehend reality”, the “general cognitive strategies” that guide systematic inquiry, have their “basis in the natural history of the human species.” They are tied to “imperatives of the socio-cultural form of life”. The reproduction of human life is irrevocably bound to the reproduction of the material basis of life. ... the “material exchange process” with nature has transpired in structures of social labor that depend on knowledge that makes a claim to truth. (1978, p.55)

This radicalisation is at the heart of understanding the theory, in that Habermas is not content just to provide a theory that describes the nature of situations, knowledge and power, but seeks to provide one that enables people to change the situation within which they are located (Morrison 2001, p.216). Essentially what he is striving towards is a rejection of the ‘objectivist illusion’, and a ‘thematization of the frames of reference in which different types of theoretical statements are located’ (McCarthy 1978, p.59). At the heart of the theory is a fundamental differentiation between three categories of processes of inquiry,



which in turn are linked to three specific cognitive interests, which are intimately connected with certain conditions of social life, particularly work, interaction and power (Habermas 1972, pp.308-311, Hargreaves et al 2003, p.183). Briefly, these categories are as follows. (i) The empirical-analytic sciences, whose aim is to produce nomological, or possible predictive knowledge. These have *technical* cognitive interests, which express the need to control and manipulate the environment, so as to satisfy basic needs. (ii) The historical-hermeneutic sciences, whose aim is to produce interpretative understandings primarily using qualitative methods. These sciences have *practical* cognitive interests, which are originated in socio-cultural life, where individuals communicate through language in order to promote the mutual understanding of individual interests and needs. (iii) The critically-orientated sciences, including psychoanalysis and the critique of ideology, as well as philosophy understood as a reflective and critical discipline. They have *emancipatory* cognitive interests which describe the ability to act rationally and make rational decisions, and therefore determine the extent to which consciousness can be liberated from forces of domination.

Hargreaves et al note the importance of these particular sciences:

The emancipation of ideologies depends on the capacity to act rationally and to be self-determined and self-reflexive. Self-determination means the capacity to be autonomous, and self-reflection refers to the capacity to critically examine the cultural context and traditions where one is inserted, as well as one's own affective and emotional dispositions and constitution. (2003, p.183)

This final category is of particular interest given the objective of this work in critiquing ideologies. In his brief description of this category, Habermas makes some points that are of interest. Foremost amongst these is the claim that the methodological framework employed in determining the validity of claims (or

‘critical propositions’) in this category, is the concept of self-reflection (1972, p.310). This has important implications in supporting the validity of methodological *modus operandi* of this work, as it implies that through reflection, extant cognitive interests can be identified. Habermas also makes note of the fact that philosophy with its current ontological predetermination, can only acquire the power it claims for itself by acknowledging that it itself is subject to an objectivist illusion, and that knowledge in philosophy is related with human interest. Essentially, Habermas argues that philosophical thought needs to move away from the myth of pure theory, and apply the same level of ideology critique that it as a field argues needs to be brought to bear in the objectivist knowledges of the sciences, to itself (1972, p.311). In simpler terms, the objectivist illusion can only be banished in any discipline by the relation of theory to practice, and in particular by foregrounding the importance of self-reflection.

This important argument is further expanded upon in the latter stages of the appendix, where Habermas presents five concrete theses regarding specifics of the relationship between knowledge and human interests. The first two deal with what might be termed the more fundamental aspects of the association:

The achievements of the transcendental subject have their basis in the natural history of the human species.

My second thesis is thus that knowledge equally serves as an instrument and transcends mere self-preservation. (1972, pp.312-315)

The following three are more focussed on the identification and recognition of the relationship:

My third thesis is thus that knowledge-constitutive interests take form in the medium of work, language, and power.

My fourth thesis is thus that in the power of self-reflection, knowledge and interest are one.

My fifth thesis is thus that the unity of knowledge and interest proves itself in a dialectic that takes the historical traces of suppressed dialogue and reconstructs what has been suppressed. (*ibid*)

What can be derived from these is a clear sense of Habermas' vision regarding knowledge and human interests, explicating his fundamental belief that the 'ontological illusion of pure theory' (1972, p.314) serves only to hide the knowledge-constitutive interests, and also promote the idea that 'Socratic dialogue' (*ibid*) is possible anywhere and at any time. What Habermas is arguing is that one has to closely reflect on, examine and deconstruct dialogic exchanges in order to get a sense of both what is propounded as knowledge, but also what interests that knowledge is serving. What we can derive from this is that knowledge is gained by self-emancipation through reflection leading to a transformed consciousness or perspective transformation. McCarthy notes the importance of this understanding:

It is only in comprehending the emancipatory interest behind critical reflective knowledge, Habermas maintains, that the correlation of knowledge and human interest in general can be adequately grasped. The dependence of the natural and cultural sciences on technical and practical interests, their embeddedness in objective structures of human life, might seem to imply the heteronomy of knowledge. It might seem that reason, in itself disinterested, is thereby placed in the service of interests that are themselves irrational, interests linked to the self-preservation of the species. But the elucidation of the category of critical reflective knowledge shows, according to Habermas, that the meaning of reason, and thus the criterion of its autonomy, cannot be accounted for without recourse to an interest of reason that is constitutive of knowledge as such. (1978, p.88)

This stance is not without difficulty. Masschelian (2004) offers a detailed critique of the development of critical educational theory, and notes that the fundamental relationship identified by Habermas, that of critique (through self-reflection), *Bildung* (education), autonomy and emancipation remain at the heart of much

contemporary educational thinking and practice. He finds this unworkably utopian, implying as it does, that rational self-determination (autonomous self-reflective life) is the ultimate of human potential. The difficulty with this is the implication that humans can relate critically to all thoughts, desires and needs (thus completely side-lining emotion), as well as the implication that humans have the ability to free themselves from that which is forced upon them, as well as everyday happenings:

The task, then, of critical educational theory would consist in enabling such an autonomous, self-reflective life. It would consist in realising and preserving rational (communicative) potential and the capacity for autonomy and self-determination. This classical figure of a critical educational theory is associated with a whole series of familiar dichotomies: autonomy versus heteronomy, emancipation versus repression, impendence versus dependency, self-determination versus other-determination, freedom versus being determined by others. ... This means that critical educational theory in its critical, educative operations is conducted by principles or ideas and that existing relations, actual behaviour and events are approached under the aspect of being or of not being (or of being to a certain extent) the realisation of these ideas or principles. Or, to put it more clearly: reality is approached from a principled attitude. (Masschelian 2004, p.355)

Constructing a critical theory that is divorced from the realities of the field and community within which it must operate would be flawed from the outset, and would serve only to revisit some of the historical enmities of drama as education. Emancipation is clearly not a realisable aim of a project such as this.

### **A Theory of Communicative Action**

Habermas has latterly moved away from his theory of epistemology (cf. Outhwaite 1996, pp.3-22 & McCarthy 1978, p.76), and arguably the *magnum opus* of his academic career is his theory of communicative action, presented

initially in two substantial tomes, though still evolving. As McCarthy notes, the ideas of epistemology and communication are not unrelated, and indeed the latter develops upon and formidably strengthens the operation and usability of the former:

... Habermas's entire project, from the critique of contemporary scientism to the reconstruction of historical materialism, rests on the possibility of providing an account of communication that is both theoretical and normative, that goes beyond a pure hermeneutics without being reducible to a strictly empirical-analytic science.

... the theory of communicative competence is decidedly not a theoretical luxury in the context of a critical social theory; it is a concerted effort to rethink the foundations of the theory-practice problematic ... Habermas's argument is, simply, that the goal of critical theory – a form of life free from unnecessary domination in all its forms – is inherent in the notion of truth; it is anticipated in every act of communication. (1978, p.272-273)

Fundamentally, the theory of communicative action aims at providing a way of describing and explaining actions, intentions and resultant meanings within the 'lifeworld', which can incorporate the notion of self-reflection on the part of the agents involved. This theory centres on a belief in the linguistic analysis of discourse and interactions, which in turns reveals a conviction that language, 'is the agency for both socialization and the intersubjective recognition that enables individuals to relate to one another' (Macey 2000, p.174). Essentially, speech language is of the utmost importance to Habermas as it is the consensual emanation from people's interactions when discussing problems, difficulties and crises. Macey sounds a note of caution as to the idyllic nature of this supposition, and suggests that it, in fact, does not exist:

Habermas acknowledges that his theory implies the existence of an idea-speech situation in which free individuals rationally discuss alternative possibilities without being coerced, and in which critical philosophy can act as a mediator. ... Discourse ethics is an ideal to be realized in the future rather than a political reality. (2000, p.174)

Regardless, the notion of communicative action was paradigmatic in terms of critical theory, as it implied a shift from an idea of the subject being alone with his/her solitary consciousness to ‘an intersubjective relation based on a theory of language and communication’ (Hargreaves *et al* 2003, p.185). The other is now viewed as a partner or potential partner in the co-operative process of reaching understanding, with a view to coordinating action. This is vital in bridging the gap between theory and action, in that through communicative action, one can clearly see how the process of developing and acquiring knowledge is intimately linked with a collective need for consensus in order to precipitate action. Self-reflective discourses of collective learning are therefore not about the individual, but are rather reflections of societal empowerment. This has implications for the way in which self-reflection, self, other, and knowledge are viewed.

Boman (2006) notes that the communicative act begins the moment a person reaches out to another with regard to some aspect of the world. In order to facilitate this, a minimum common ground (e.g. in terms of linguistics conventions) needs to be established, and there is a requirement for a level of co-ordination of action. She asserts that Habermas’ concept of reason is therefore a procedural one, insofar as a procedure is utilised, but an open attitude towards meaning is always maintained - ‘communicative reason treats almost everything as contingent’ (2006, p.552). The implication of this is that it allows Habermas to interpret the development of individuality in a relational way, as opposed to in splendid isolation. The important consequence of this from an educational perspective is that it lends some credence to the idea of social learning which is

so central to drama as education, but also social action, which is so central to drama in society.

Boman continues in her article by problematising this position and by suggesting that these educative relationships cannot be purely ‘strategic’, as that would ignore the individual’s personhood. She clearly delineates a fundamental conflict in conceptualising the idea of communicative action at the heart of education:

Seeing education as a process in which the child is, in a sense, *made* into a communicative person could at the same time mean that his or her personhood is denied. On the other hand, to conceive of education *as* communication is compatible with a concept of identity expressed as the individual’s deliberative answer to who he or she wants to be and what role he or she wants to play in a shared community. The promise of education is to develop both collective and individual standpoints towards ethical, moral, and political questions, and according to Habermas, one can only hope that individuals develop deliberative democratic attitudes. (Boman 2006, p.562)

Hargreaves *et al* (2003) deal with this somewhat by asking the question as to whether Habermas’ critical theory has a practical intent. Their conclusion is that it certainly has, insofar as it directs the development of people’s communicative ability in order to engage in rational discussion as a basis of democracy, or as in this work, education. Again, this conclusion is entirely resonant with the idea of drama as education that is being developed in this work.

### **The Construction of Knowledge – Foucault**

In his essay describing the emergent influence of Michel Foucault on the field of education, Peters notes that Foucault’s most significant contribution is to provide, ‘theoretical and methodological means to study the field of education,

... focusing on the power/knowledge relations and conditions under which subjects are constituted objects of knowledge' (2001, p.174). In terms of the methodological focus of this work, Foucault's importance lies precisely in this vein – it offers a strong and complimentary lens in examining the nature of what is held to be knowledge in drama as education, and especially in questioning the manner in which it has come about, as well as the relationships knowledge has with power and society. Indeed, Ball suggests that Foucault conceptualises these as a singular concept, 'that of power-knowledge, the single, inseparable configuration of ideas and practices that constitute a discourse' (1990, p.5). The reason for this merging is a straightforward one: 'Knowledge does not reflect power relations but is immanent in them' (*ibid*). The nature of that relationship however, is anything but straightforward.

### **Archaeology of Knowledge**

Foucault's seminal notion of an archaeology of knowledge is presented and expounded upon in his book of the same title (1972), which was in itself a part response to perceived methodological weaknesses identified in his ground-breaking The Order of Things (1970). In the introductory section to the 1972 work, Foucault paints a picture of the difficulty facing historians trying to describe the histories of periods, and contrasts it with the attempt to describe the histories of science, ideas, thought, philosophy, literature, etc. He notes that whereas historians are predominantly concerned with the study of stable periods of history, the group involved in the latter activity are more caught up with notions of rupture, discontinuity and interruptions in epochs and periods. This



new approach to history brings its own difficulties in that it requires the analyst to bring forth a whole new field of questions, which allow the conception of ideas of rupture and discontinuity:

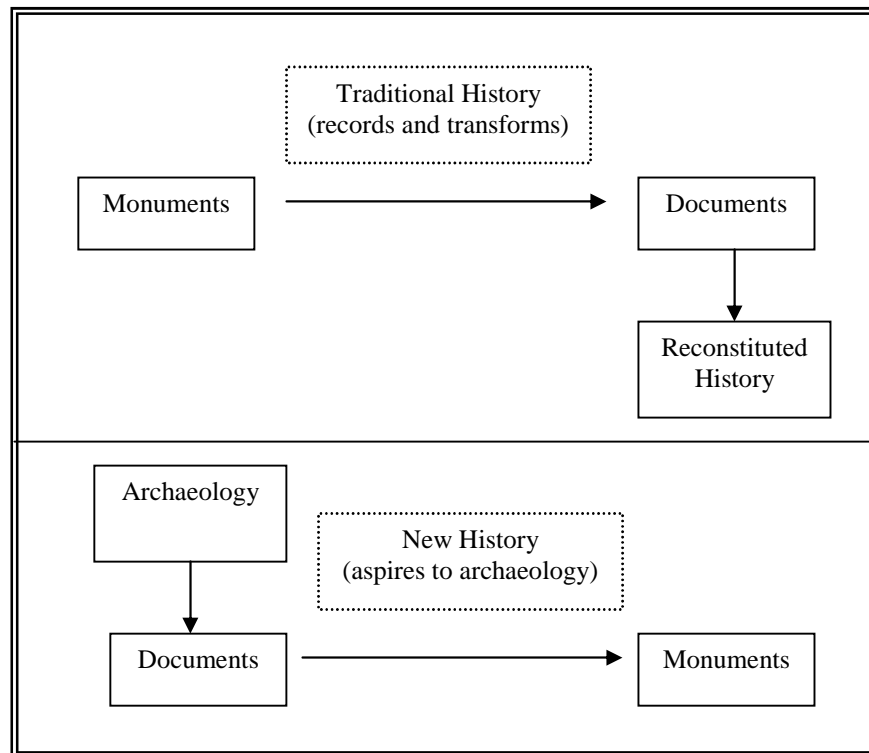
In short, the history of thought, of knowledge, of philosophy, of literature seems to be seeking, and discovering, more and more discontinuities, whereas history itself appears to be abandoning the irruption of events in favour of stable structures. (Foucault 1972, p.6)

Having established this directional schism of sorts, Foucault immediately moves to narrow it by putting forth the idea that this apparent interchange is not as great as it initially seems: both cases basically consist of seeking answers to the same fundamental problems, but in doing so have created opposite effects. He moves that these problems are, in fact, about ‘the questioning of the *document*’ (1972, p.6). From this established commonality, Foucault differentiates once again between both camps in terms of their treatment of *documents*, and the manner in which they employ *archaeology*. Firstly, to an examination of the *document*.

The *document* traditionally was the creation of history; where history sought to memorise the *monuments* of the past through transformation into *documents*, then lending some *speech* to them. In the new histories, i.e. those that focus on rupture and discontinuity, the *document* is at the other end of the historical process, being the starting point that eventually results in the creation of a *monument*. What is meant by this is that the concentration of the new historian is not now in terms of the creation of *document* as a means to somehow record the *monuments* of the past; but is instead more in looking at the *document* with a view to ascertaining the way in which the *monument* is represented in it, thus revealing something of how the *monument* is viewed (constructed), but perhaps

more importantly, describing something of how it was felt at that time the *monument* should best be recorded in a *document*. Thus the *monument* is in fact re-created, but with some knowledge of the political forces that ‘immortalised’ it in *document* and thus lent it a voice in the first instance.

Foucault’s concept of *archaeology* is fundamentally tied up with the interplay of these ideas of *document*, *monument* and *speech* – it is not concerned with the evolution of ideas, but rather the emergence of discursive formations, similar to those described above. An *archaeology* ultimately aspires to describe the *episteme* which governs the power relations between discursive formations, an *episteme* simply being a system of understanding a body of epistemologically important ideas. The role of *archaeology*, in both of these cases, is similar in that it seeks to decipher the *monument*, but radically different both in the manner in which it is employed and also in terms of what it aims to achieve. *Archaeology* (in terms of new histories) assumes that the *documents* associated with times of rupture and discontinuity in particular are particularly rich means of (re)constructing *monuments*, and even more interestingly from the point of view of this thesis, are essential in identifying the *episteme* within which they originated. This opens the gateway to an understanding of the power relations that govern the discursive formations associated with that particular *document*. The manner in which *archaeology* is employed in relation to both the traditional and new histories can be expressed schematically as in Figure 2.3 below.



**Figure 2.3 – The Operation of Traditional and New Histories**

Adopting a perspective such as this has some immediate consequences for understandings in any given field or community. As noted earlier, the focus on rupture and discontinuities takes precedence in the history of ideas, whilst traditional history focuses on the emergence of long periods. This means that the idea of discontinuity takes on major importance, with all the difficulties regarding identification and mainstreaming of the often intangible ideas of discontinuity which that clearly entails. Foucault notes that this understanding demands that the idea of a *total history* must now disappear as an impossibility, and that the notion of a *general history* gains credence (1972, p.10). The difference between these two is as a lay understanding implies – a general history does not lay claim to a singular and definitive understanding of truth. Finally, a new history is also characterised by a great number of methodological difficulties, especially with regard to the gathering of *documents*.

In terms of presenting a rationale as to why an approach such as this is necessary and desirable in the field of knowledge, Foucault suggests his aims are altruistic in that he seeks not to simply add to the structuralist debate, but instead to, ‘uncover the principles and consequences of an autochthonous transformation that is taking place in the field of historical knowledge’ (1972, p.17). He sees the work as belonging, ‘to that field in which the questions of the human being, consciousness, origin and the subject emerge, intersect, mingle, and separate off’ (1972, p.18). In essence, it is an essential exploration in order to further our understandings of the fundamentally constructed idea of knowledge. Foucault describes in detail the manner in which archaeological description works with regard to the history of ideas (1972, pp. 151-156).

To give a brief example of Foucault’s theory in action one need look no further than the history of Irish theatre, particularly the period 1601-1800. From the perspective of old history the challenge is to look to the *documents* of the period with a view to reconstituting the *monuments* to the greatest or truest extent possible. The majority of books on Irish theatre history show scant enough activity for that period. Morash’s volume (2002) charts a strongly Anglo-Irish literary theatre that spread from an initially small base in Dublin to the provincial cities and towns where playhouses were established. Though initially strongly loyal to court and crown, with its growth came more openness in participation and diversity in content, to the point where a strong tradition of dissent had begun to establish itself:

... (T)he Irish theatre had grown rapidly, becoming a commercial enterprise and spreading from one struggling Dublin theatre to include

Cork, Belfast, Limerick, Derry and Waterford. And yet, many people still thought of the Irish stage as a sort of alternative parliament, both an embodiment of Irish rights and the place in which rights denied could be debated – or, if necessary, demanded. This high sense of purpose had energised the theatre of the eighteenth century, sometimes to the point of violence: and it was with this legacy that it entered into a new epoch, when an independent Irish legislature finally did come into existence in 1782. (Morash 2002, p.57)

Interestingly, Morash's chronology of these two centuries includes as many historical and political events as it does theatrical ones. This is somewhat indicative of the relatively low regard in which this period of Irish theatrical life is generally held, understandably overshadowed in historical retrospect by the seismic happenings in theatre on the 'mainland' as it then was. The dramatic works of Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) and Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816) are arguably the only significant contributions of the epoch to what is commonly acknowledged as the canon of Irish dramatic literature. Whilst Morash's is the only significant account of the period in question, the lack of value attached to it is reinforced by the dearth of attention it receives in other volumes that supposedly deal with that particular period such as Kavanagh (1946), MacLiammóir (1964) and Fitz-Simon (1979). Therefore, an old or traditional history, in Foucault's terms, of Irish theatre from 1601-1800, shows it as a period of some growth, with the beginnings of a move away from the purely entertainment-oriented offerings of the playhouses, and the emergence of a political theatre. Ultimately though, there is a large degree of consensus that as a period it can be regarded as being relatively fallow.

And so to the question as to how an *archaeological* approach in constructing a new or general history differs in allowing the historian to re-construct the

monument of Irish theatre from 1601-1800? Such an approach begins, as Foucault suggests, not with extant historical *documents* which claim to chronicle the period, but with the gathering of a wide and disparate range of elements that collectively give the opportunity to examine discursive formations, and ultimately the controlling *episteme*. With a cursory glance at some few materials concerning the question in hand, the possibilities of a new history become immediately evident. Fletcher (2000) and Donnelly & Miller (1998) take a much wider historical view than Morash and the other of events in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, looking to performance and polity, as well as popular culture, respectively. Immediately upon examining them, an appreciation grows of a broader oral, communal and largely performative tradition –carried out initially entirely in Gaeilge (Irish Gaelic) but incorporating more English-language work with the growing Anglicisation of the country. Caerwyn-Williams & Ní Mhuiríosa (1979) in their important account of that period in Gaelic literature, detail the declining years of a rich and multifarious tradition whereby poets would travel the country and recite their works (usually specially written in honour of the Gaelic Chieftains who were their patrons, and who would offer them lodging and food). These gatherings (known as Cúirteanna or Éigse) followed a heavily ritualised and interactive pattern, and in terms of contemporary ideas of performance theory (cf. Schechner 1988, 1993, 2002), they can certainly be conceptualised as part of a dramatic continuum. With the growing influence of the English language and indeed formal literature, these forms and traditions were beginning to be replaced by new ways, but without their societal function and inherently political commentary being diluted:

Just as the denizens of the Dublin or London coffee houses chose to admire or abuse each other in the form of a verse epistle, so the Gaelic

authors adapted that form known as *barántas* or warrant. The Court of Poetry was ruled over by a Judge or High Sheriff who was responsible for issuing such warrants. The whole convention was a parody of the processes of the despised English law, since the High Sheriff gave each poem the semblance of a legal document, by signing his name on the manuscript along with the date and country of issue. It was also, however, a variant of the 'familiar epistle' of Augustan England. The High Sheriff ruled over his court with all the magisterial efficiency of Mr. Spectator in London, and his style had a similar formality, acceptable to men who looked up to a self-declared leader in all discussions. ... The same idea underlies the *barántas*, which was often but the first salvo of a developing controversy, eliciting replies from other poets. (Kieberd 2000, pp. 49-50)

In terms of further gathering a range of elements, it is fundamentally important to note that several major political events took place within the time-frame in question: **1607** – The 'Flight of the Earls' resulted in the most important Gaelic Chieftains being forced into exile in France; **1649-53** – The Cromwellian conquest of Ireland resulted in massive internal migration of the native Irish to poorer parts of the island; **1690** – The Battle of the Boyne between the forces of King William and King James; **1695** – The introduction of the Penal Laws suppressed Catholicism and Presbyterianism; **1740-1741** – Famine; **1782** – An Irish Parliament is established, dominated by Anglo-Irish Protestants; **1798** – United Irishmen Rebellion. Detailed analysis of the consequences of these events is neither desirable or possible here, but they clearly show an island in the throes of continuous socio-political change and with regular major political 'happenings' over the course of the two centuries in question.

Moving further afield again, a look to folk customs and rituals develops further points of interest. Gailey (1969) charts the breadth of the Irish folk tradition that has evolved from that period in Irish life and notes its richly performative characteristics as well as its fundamental importance to Irish life.

Rituals/performances such as ‘Wakes’, ‘Wren-boys’, ‘Mummers’ and ‘American Wakes’ each clearly demonstrated efficacious function as well as fulfilling the need for entertainment.

In terms of constructing a new or general history and in creating a *monument* of Irish drama from 1601-1800, all of these documentary sources lead not to an existing definitive history but instead to a series of questions that serve only to problematise the manner in which period has been recorded by history thus-far. By looking to a range of linguistic, anthropological, literary and political sources, one begins to conceptualise the epoch in broader terms than the fairly linear tradition of English-language, literary-based, stage-bound theatre represented in histories such as Morash’s (2002). These sources force the historian working in the sense proposed by Foucault to question how fundamental ideas of drama and theatre are conceptualised and understood in this period; how ongoing political strife and enforced linguistic change necessitated artistic response through the evolution of new conventions; how the ‘imported’ Anglo-Saxon tradition of play-houses contrasted with the ‘native’ Irish traditions of bardic/poetic courts; and how the primacy of entertainment in English theatre differed with Irish rituals which were fundamentally efficacious in nature. In beginning to acknowledge this breadth of historical possibilities, the author of a general history is faced with a set of choices in determining how to (re)construct the *monument* of that period of Irish history. The strength of adopting Foucault’s perspective of a general history is that what now becomes apparent in this are the potential discursive formations that any chosen emphasis will bring. These, as will be seen presently, offer untrammelled opportunities in understanding the



importance of political considerations in the construction of knowledge. The knowledge-power equation becomes manifest in the construction of a *monument* in a general history.

As with any substantive philosophical theory of this sort, Foucault's epistemological theory has many supporters, but also is not without its critics. Wain (1996) critiques Foucault's contribution to education with particular regard to the modernist paradigm. He concludes that the importance of Foucault for educational research is undeniable:

This necessity, then, of doing a genealogical analysis of educational discourse, of the research disciplines that have arisen and grown out of it and with it, including philosophy, of the 'knowledge' they have produced and its relationship with the power exercised in educational institutions, and ultimately, their contribution to the constitution of the self that they have made their 'subject' in the different senses Foucault assigns to that term is another fundamental task, beside investigating the relevance of his account of power for contemporary education institutions and practices and applying it to actual educational sites, which Foucault suggests for educationalists and philosophers of education (1996, p.350).

### **Discursive Formations**

As has become apparent, intrinsically tied to the idea of archaeology is that of discourse, and in particular, discursive formations. Foucault (1972) clarifies at an early stage that discourse refers not specifically to linguistic structures or indeed texts, but to the practice of discourse. Taking the recognised and defined unities of knowledge such as individuals, works, notions, theories, *oeuvres* and books, he states that these unities must be suspended when working in an archaeological vein, and that the emphasis needs to be placed on the emergent discourse that results from them. Regarding books, he notes that:

The book is not simply the object that one holds in one's hands; and it cannot remain within the little parallelepiped that contains it: its unity is variable and relative. As soon as one questions that unity, it loses its self-evidence; it indicates itself, constructs itself, only on the basis of a complex field of discourse (1972, p.26).

This discourse must always be immediate. Foucault warns of the danger of allowing it to be linked to the origins of a particular debate or understanding; it then becomes an historical analysis of discourse, which is more concerned with what was said as opposed to what is being said:

We must renounce all those themes whose function is to ensure the historical continuity of discourse and its secret presence to itself in the interplay of a constantly recurring absence. We must be ready to receive every moment of discourse in its sudden irruption; in that punctuality in which it appears, and in that temporal dispersion that enables it to be repeated, known, forgotten, transformed, utterly erased, and hidden, far from all view, in the dust of books. Discourse must not be referred to the distant presence of the origin, but treated as and when it occurs (1972, p.28).

When these pre-existing forms of continuity are suspended, the claim is that an entire field is set free. The term field is not un-problematic, particularly in the context of this thesis, and a discussion of the concept follows in the next chapter. Any given field is vast, and is at the same time definable yet unimaginable in that it consists of the 'totality of all effective statements (whether spoken or written)' (Foucault 1972, p.29), as they occur. The field is always finite and limited, and sets the analyst in pursuit of a 'pure description of discursive events' (*ibid*). What this ultimately purports to achieve is that it allows the analyst to grasp the statement exactly in the context in which it has occurred; understand the specific conditions that surround it and its utterance; compare it with other statements with which it may be linked; and perhaps most importantly, illuminate what other types of statement it excludes. The ultimate purpose of a theory such as this

is that in allowing the suspension of accepted 'natural' and 'universal' unities, new possibilities are possible, and indeed demanded. These occur not randomly, but within the scheme of a group of controlled decisions, and force us to enter a process of re-situating and perhaps re-conceptualising the statement.

In order for subsequent analysis to take place, Foucault specifies three rules that pertain to the formation of discourse. First amongst these is the mapping of *surfaces of emergence* (1972, p.45), where ideas emerge and may be designated and analysed. Next is the identification of the *authorities of delimitation* (1972, p.46), be they medical, religious, literary, etc. Finally, the *grids of specification* (*ibid*) are to be acknowledged, as they are the systems by which a classification of ideas has taken place. Applying this to his study of madness, Foucault suggests that these are the systems according to which different types of madness are 'divided, contrasted, related, regrouped, classified, derived from one another as objects of psychiatric discourse' (*ibid*). Returning to the example cited earlier, the *grids of specification* are therefore the systems that governed the breadth (or obvious lack thereof) of Morash's (2002) history, and fails to recognise inherently native forms of drama as being worthy of recognition in the canon. Yet, as might be imagined, difficulties exist with this level of the theory. Foucault readily admits that the simple acknowledgement of their existence does not result in the fully formed objects of discourse that we encounter in various fields. Similarly unclear are the relationships that exist between the three planes of differentiation.

In order to address these deficiencies, he describes a series of conditions pertaining to the emergence of objects through discourse formation. Foremost amongst these is the fact that an object of discourse, ‘exists under the positive conditions of a complex group of relations’ (1972, p.49); it is not brought forth into a vacuous, limbo-like nebulous, awaiting someone to make sense of it, but instead is bestowed immediately with its own meaning. These positive conditions are established, ‘between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterization’ (*ibid*), but their importance is that they are not present in the discursive object, nor a factor in the deployment of the object or its analysis, but are merely what enables it to appear, or as Foucault prefers, ‘to be placed in a field of exteriority’ (1972, p.50). The importance of the identification of the existence of these positive conditions is not to be underestimated, in that it describes a fundamental aspect of the relationship between knowledge and power in an archaeology. Ultimately, some description of the positive conditions that have served to govern the discursive formations in the field and community of drama as education may help identify and illuminate the nature of the myths that are claimed to exist, but more importantly, clearly signpost the mythic nature of much knowledge.

Another French philosopher of note, Giles Deleuze, offers a detailed critique of Foucault’s work (1988). He clearly isolates and identifies the importance of the context of discourse noted above:

We might object that all Foucault is doing is refining a very classical analysis that relies on *context*. This would ignore the novelty of the criteria which he institutes, precisely in order to show that one can articulate a phrase or formulate a proposition without always occupying

the same place in the corresponding statement, and without reproducing the same particular features. And if one is led to denounce false repetitions by determining the discursive formation to which a statement belongs, one equally uncovers certain isomorphisms or isotopisms lurking between distinct formations. Context explains nothing, since its nature varies according to the particular discursive formation or family of statements under consideration (1988, p.11).

Objects or knowledge comes about as a result of discourse formation, which is the consequence of the analysis of a document, which in turn is itself created to preserve a monument. According to Foucault's theory, all of this comes about in quite a specific fashion. However, it can never come about without some exterior forces, 'positive conditions', playing a part in the process of discourse formation. Thus, the basis of a relationship between power and knowledge in a Foucaultian theoretical frame becomes manifest.

### **A (Post-) Modernist Dilemma**

The golden age of cultural theory is long past. The pioneering works of Jacques Lacan, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault are several decades behind us. So are the path-breaking early writings of Raymond Williams, Luce Irigaray, Pierre Bourdieu, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous, Jürgen Habermas, Fredric Jameson and Edward Said. Not much that has been written since has matched the ambitiousness and originality of these founding mothers and fathers. (Eagleton 2004, p.1)

In beginning to argue the theoretical relevance of Barthes, Habermas and Foucault for this thesis, what is immediately apparent are not their commonalities and possibilities for productive collaboration, but instead their dissimilarities and discontinuities. The question that looms above all is as to how the three most famous proponents of structuralism, modernism and arguably post-modernism can co-exist within a rigorous theoretical structure.

As has been seen in the preceding pages, all three theorists are fundamentally concerned with the relationship of knowledge to society, and in turn with power, but they also have substantial differences in terms of the contexts within which they have presented their theses, not to mention in the manner in which they have been received and critiqued by the academic community over the last half-century. Having made that point, it is important to note that the fields and community (these terms will be fully teased out in the next chapter) within which this work is located, drama as education, has engaged in little dialogue with reference to the possible implications of these theorists. The following section will attempt to illuminate some of those difficulties. Not all differences will be reconciled, but an attempt will be made to construct to a coherent methodological and philosophical basis on which to examine extant myths in drama as education. What clearly emerges is that the commonalities and advantages in pursuing this route of enquiry far outweigh the possible difficulties.

Barthes is regarded as one of the structuralist 'gang of four', and it is commonly noted that 'Myth Today' marks one of the most important milestones in his semiological period (Macy 2000, p.30). The work of Foucault is perhaps the most difficult to pigeon-hole, indeed some regard it as unclassifiable; but his early work, particularly the concepts of archaeology and discursive formations reveal a post-structuralist mind-set (Popkewitz & Brennan 1998). On the other hand, Habermas, throughout the not insubstantial corpus of his work, is an avowed defender of the modernist mission so beloved of the Frankfurt School. Famously critical of Foucault's repeated attempts to 'explode' modernism, his

own writings illuminate just one of many difficulties in attempting to marry their ideas:

(Foucault) contrasts his critique of power with the ‘analysis of truth’ in such a fashion that the former becomes deprived of the normative yardsticks that it would have to borrow from the latter. Perhaps the force of this contradiction caught up with Foucault ... drawing him again into the circle of the philosophical discourse of modernity which he thought he could explode (Habermas, J. cited in Couzens Hoy & McCarthy 1994, p.108).

This project argues that in the spirit and reality of working in a rapidly evolving critical educational research paradigm, it needs to draw on modernist foundations and post-modern methodologies. In constructing a theoretical framework, the influence of both of these highly influential movements is undeniable, but the need to classify this research is a futile and unworkable exercise. Making a claim such as this is not without precedent. Eagleton (2004) is critical of the accomplishments of much of cultural theory and its intellectual traditions. As part of this dissent, he declares the ultimate futility he feels in the need of cultural academics to classify and label ideas as belonging to either the modernist or post-modern movements in order to efficiently deal with ideas of culture:

This (the perception of free-floating culture) is one difference between modernism and postmodernism. Modernism, or so it imagined, was old enough to remember a time when there were firm foundations to human existence, and was still reeling from the shock of their being kicked rudely away. This is one reason why modernism is of a tragic temper. ... Postmodernism is too young to remember a time when there was (so it was rumoured) truth, identity and reality, and so feels no dizzying abyss beneath its feet. It is used to treading clear air, and has no sense of giddiness. In a reverse of the phantom limb syndrome, there seems to be something missing, but there is not. We are simply the prisoners of a deceptive metaphor here, imagining as we do that we stand on the world. It is not that the pure ice beneath our feet has yielded to rough ground; the ground was rough all along. (Eagleton 2004, pp.57-58)

The claim for this work is not that it is beyond theory: it plainly is not. But equally it is not reducible to a single theoretical stance, seeking instead to give life to a *bricolage* (detailed in Chapter Four) not only in its operation but also in its conceptualisation.

At the heart of the theories presented here is the quest for an understanding as to how knowledge can be conceptualised, and what each of the three theorists present is an individual chunk of an over-arching theory, which collectively can go some way towards understanding the manner in which knowledge, practices, language, practitioners and theorists are mythologised in the community of drama as education. What is required at this juncture is some clarity with regard to fundamental precepts of the critical mythic lens proposed in this work, and the manner in which the macro-level theories discussed in this chapter orientate that methodological stance. The specific construction and operation of the critical mythic lens will be dealt with in full detail in Chapter Four of the thesis.

### **Towards a Critical Mythic *Bricolage***

Barthes argues that the world creates myths in order to transform history into nature, (thus hiding specific bourgeoisie ideologies), and that in order to decipher myths, particularly cultural myths, we first need to understand something of them and their nature. As has already been argued, education is here conceived of as a fundamentally cultural pursuit. It follows from this that in order to understand the nature of education and by implication, what educationalists are designing, teaching and perpetuating (questions of epistemology), it is essential that the



process of education is conceptualised as being fundamentally mythic in nature. This perspective allows the field of education and the community of drama as education an opportunity to visualise, understand, critique, and perhaps change these somewhat invisible processes, and in turn, a chance to examine why and how myths come into existence. All this is done without prejudice, insofar as a mythic perspective does not claim right or wrong: it simply acknowledges the ideological and political burden of knowledge. This understanding of myth provides some of the justification and the substance of the over-arching mythological **orientation** for the construction of a methodology described here as a critical mythic lens. Its applicability to this work lies on several levels. In a community that has as colourful and varied a history as drama as education, where numerous claims and counter-claims of ‘truthfulness’ have been made over the decades, it is important to re-claim the idea of myth, but also to emphasise the lack of an ‘absolute’ truth, which perhaps has been laid claim to on too many occasions over the years. The idea of myth is also particularly resonant given its traditional association with story and narrative, ideas that are fundamental to drama. It is, as a term and concept, both organic and germane to research in drama as education, something that is intrinsic to the idea of *bricolage*.

Habermas suggests that knowledge and knowledge systems can only be understood in relation to society. He posits that the critically orientated sciences have an emancipatory cognitive interest, and the validity of claims in this area can only ultimately be determined through self-reflection. Knowledge is acquired by self-emancipation through reflection leading to a transformed consciousness

or perspective transformation. The idea of communicative action is also seminal in this work as it foregrounds Habermas' concern that knowing is never a solitary process; that it is only through a process of communication with the other that self-reflection is precipitated and through this knowledge is acquired. In keeping with the fundamental mission of critical theory, the orientating contribution of Habermas to this project is the concept that self-reflection as a result of a process of communication and leading to perspective transformation is the **specific focus** of utilising the methodology of a critical mythic lens. The philosophical intent, therefore, of this work, is that it would provoke dialogue and communication in the fields of theatre and education and specifically the community of drama as education. As a result of this, self-reflection may be provoked, with the possibility of change ensuing. This is all without reference to what sort of change that might be, and whether it is good, bad or indifferent. Instead of adopting a problematic emancipatory intent, the aim is simply to incite acting (action) in the most fundamental sense of the word.

Foucault is concerned with the systems of knowledge and the manner of their production. His idea of archaeology of knowledge seeks to move beyond 'mere' signs and move instead to the analysis of real content in real time. Archaeology treats discourse as practices that form the statements and knowledge objects of which they speak. This understanding of knowledge challenges the reader to understand knowledge not as something concrete, but something ever-changing and fluid, and which comes about as a result of discourse within the field. In this work, it is proposed that Foucault's theories provide an understanding of the **nature of knowledge**, how it is created through discourse, and how that

knowledge, when looked at from the point of view of a new history, ultimately reveals much of the discursive formations and the episteme which resulted in the creation of a document. To take a very practical example: the Irish primary curriculum for drama suggests that the primary task of the teacher of drama, 'is to preserve and encourage (the) desire to make-believe while at the same time extending it to other areas of life and knowledge' (Govt. of Ireland 1999a, p.5). Treating this as knowledge, the researcher immediately looks to establish the discursive formations behind the statement – what are the developments in Irish primary education and curriculum development in general, and in Irish and international education in drama specifically that may have given rise to this statement. This leads to an attempt to identify the surfaces of emergence and authorities of delineation that have created the conditions for that discourse to take place. In the case of the example here, the surfaces of emergence might be represented by the particular multifaceted socio-political context within which the revised Irish curriculum of 1999 emerged. The authorities of delineation include, amongst others, the Irish Dept. of Education, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the Educational Consultant for drama, etc. Ultimately what is sought is a description of the episteme that governed the creation of the document. That will be attempted in Chapters Five-Eight of this work.

In summary of the above, this research project has a clear orientation centred around an understanding of myths in drama as education. It has a focus whereby it wishes to facilitate self-reflection for the community of drama as education with a view to allowing and encouraging perspective transformation (acting). It

treats knowledge not as a given or truth, but simply as a statement that can facilitate a discussion of the conditions and power structures that have enabled its coming into being.

Before proceeding, a note of explanation is required with regard to the centrality of language, linguistics and discourse to all three. In order to further understand the manner in which a critical mythic approach to drama as education may pay dividends an attempt must be made to reconcile some of the apparently divergent views of what language is, what its function is, and how within the scope of this thesis, it can be approached and analysed. For Barthes, language is laden with signs to be deciphered, and it can be justifiably claimed that he treats language as a carrier of sign, but of no real consequence beyond that. Moriarty notes a fundamental problem with this usage for the researcher:

The myth does not, as we saw, operate directly on the real, but in signs: its language is a metalanguage. But if this is so, then the mythologist, producing language out of an existing metalanguage, is one stage further removed from reality, like the Platonic artist copying a natural world that is itself a copy. (Moriarty 1991, p.29)

A situation where the researcher is removed from the language is one that differs with Habermas's understanding, where language is something concrete and leads to knowledge, as opposed to hiding it. This language arises as a result of discourse in the real world, where people communicate in order to solve problems and find solutions, thus creating knowledge through that process. For Foucault, and as outlined in detail earlier, discourse is of primary importance, and each and every speech and language act engages in discourse formation, whereby innumerable yet finite meanings, and therefore knowledge, is created.

These differing understandings are not a barrier in terms of moving a critical mythic lens forwards. Progressing beyond the somewhat constraining actuality of the language 'act', what they provide is a range of opportunities for analysis and understanding. These allow the examination of the range of truths that can be held with regard to the language (both written and verbal) of drama as education. What results is a research lens that reveals the manner in which language creates (Foucault), or permits/facilitates (Habermas), or perpetuates and conceals (Barthes), knowledge within the field. As with the construction of the research lens, this perspective is entirely in keeping with a post-modern critical approach. The actuality of its operation, will be dealt with in the next chapter.

The nature of *bricolage* is such that orientating theories for this work should be cherry-picked and layered in this manner. The argument can be made that a closer examination of all three orientating theorists will reveal fundamental and irreconcilable differences between them in terms of their understandings. That is not in the spirit of *bricolage*, where a multitude of meanings are welcome as part of the feedback looping and increasing of complexity.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE SITE**

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This chapter will briefly look at the site of this research. This is essential in order that the fundamentally social processes of producing and interpreting discourse can be appropriately located, with a view to identifying and categorising that discourse which may be relevant to the purpose of demythologising. It is also important that some sense is established in the work of the cultural and educational institutions within which it is held that myths operate. Given that the methodological configuration of this work is fundamentally modernist, it is in keeping with the quasi-structuralist perspective adopted here that site and discourse are described and classified. An understanding of language as a social phenomenon is well charted:

In addition to the order of discourse of a social institution, which structures constituent discourses in a particular way, we can refer to the order of discourse of the society as a whole, which structures the orders of discourse of the various social institutions in a particular way. How discourses are structured in a given order of discourse, and how structurings change over time, are determined by changing relationships of power at the level of the social institution or of the society. Power at these levels includes the capacity to control orders of discourse; one aspect of such control is ideological. (Fairclough 2001, p.25)

The concept of orders of discourses is a particularly useful one here, as a range of discourses need to be engaged with, in order to attempt to identify the myths in drama as education with a view to attempting to further understanding an historical concept as broad as *episteme*. It will be argued here that the discourse of drama as education does not emanate from a single readily identifiable field or community, but from an intersection of fields and communities. Some consideration must be given to why that is the case by exploring both the ‘hard’ concept of field and the ‘soft’ concept of community.

### **Field as a ‘Hard’ Critical Concept**

Bourdieu's theoretical conceptualisation of fields of cultural production (1993) is recognised as being of importance in sociological and critical studies. It is a complex framework that describes and explains how various social fields of endeavour function, and in particular how individual agents operate within those fields. Whilst it does not deal with education in the same specific manner as much of Bourdieu's other work<sup>v</sup>, it is of relevance here given that it does deal specifically with cultural production, and with describing the manner in which art-work is produced by looking at the site (field) of production, and the conditions (capital and positions) governing the production of the art:

One of the major difficulties of the social history of philosophy, art or literature is that it has to reconstruct these spaces of original possibles which, because they were part of the self-evident givens of the situation, remain unremarked and are therefore unlikely to be mentioned in contemporary accounts, chronicles or memoirs. It is difficult to conceive of the vast amount of information which is linked with membership of a field and which all contemporaries immediately invests in their reading of works. (Bourdieu 1993, pp.31-32)

Essentially, Bourdieu frames field theory in terms of individuals, positions, cultural capital and symbolic power. Individuals occupy positions based upon the amount of cultural capital they hold in the field. Cultural capital can be understood as 'legitimate knowledge of one form or another' (Jenkins 2002, p.85), and should be differentiated from economic, social and symbolic capital. Bourdieu suggests that a literary or artistic field is a 'field of forces, but it is also a field of struggles', and that each 'position-taking receives its distinctive value from its negative relationship with the co-existent position-taking to which it is

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<sup>v</sup> See Bourdieu & Passeron (1977), Harker et al. (1990), Jöhanneesson & Popkewitz (2001) and Jenkins (2002) for detailed commentary on the implications of Bourdieu's reflexive sociology on understanding the operation of educational systems.



objectively related and which determine it by delimiting it' (1993, p.30). Put simply, individuals compete against each other for cultural capital in order to promote their own positions within the field. The greater the cultural capital they accumulate, the more symbolic power they accrue. This competition happens by individuals promoting their knowledge as being of more worth and greater legitimacy than that of other position-takers in the field. The example Bourdieu uses is that when a new artistic group makes its presence felt in a field, this may have the impact of pushing those who hold dominant positions (i.e. have a lot of cultural capital), into lesser positions. This has the effect that the field will then begin to see their work as being outmoded or classic. Bourdieu also deals with the conditions by which works of art are recognised within a field, and suggests that any artwork within a field needs to be understood 'as a *manifestation* of the field as a whole, in which all the powers of the field, and all the determinisms inherent in its structure and functioning, are concentrated' (1993, p.37).

Interestingly, he stipulates that the production of discourse about a work of art, be it historical, critical, etc., is one of the conditions of production of work within the field. Some discussion regarding what needs to happen in order that a new, discrete and fully inclusive sub-field of drama as education may come, about will take place in later chapters.

Of most interest to this project however, are the practical applications of field and particularly the conditions that govern the existence of, and entrance to a given field. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that Bourdieu situates the field of cultural production within a field of power, which in turn is situated within a field of class relations. Each field is subject to the same forces that define and

dictate the operation of the field(s) within which it resides. Membership of a field is solely adjudicated on the basis of effecting some change within the field, but Bourdieu suggests that the boundary is of particular interest to those seeking to understand a field:

The *boundary* of the field is a stake of struggles, and the social scientist's task is not to draw a dividing line between the agents involved in it by imposing a so-called operational definition, which is most likely to be imposed on him by his own prejudices or presuppositions, but to describe a *state* (long-lasting or temporary) of these struggles and therefore of the frontier delimiting the territory held by the competing agents. One could thus examine the characteristics of this boundary, which may or may not be institutionalized, that is to say, protected by conditions of entry that are tacitly and practically required (such as a certain cultural capital) or explicitly codified and legally guaranteed. (1993, pp.42-43)

This can be clearly seen in the work of Esslin (1987), when he poses the question as to what are the boundaries of the field of drama. Esslin plays with boundaries such as fiction, mimesis, actions, events, ritual and audience, but concludes that, 'the artist who performs the mimetic action, the actor, thus stands at the very centre of the art of drama' (1987, p.28). What is particularly evident from his innovative semiotic approach is that a range of sometimes conflicting, but certainly co-existing, pursuits lay claim to belonging to the field of drama.

Whilst drama as education could possibly be recognised as an international field of cultural production given the range and extent of work that takes place under its aegis, that status could not be applied in the Rep. of Ireland. This is because of the small numbers of position-takers (both individuals and institutions) who occupy the field, and the virtually non-existent levels of cultural capital that such a field might attract. This point will become more obvious later in this discussion

upon examination of a range of mythologies, when the lack of discourse in the drama as education in Ireland will be a notable stumbling block in attempting to demythologise. However, drama/theatre certainly is a field of cultural production in Ireland, and education is clearly a major national field of concern. Drama as education exists on the boundaries of both of these strongly defined and highly competitive fields. Undoubtedly they intersect, with some individuals occupying positions in both. More pertinently, however, a substantial number of the practitioners in drama as education fall into one or neither of the fields.

Taking cognisance of Bourdieu's comments above, the sub-field defined by the intersection of the boundaries between drama/theatre and education, and the space lying immediately outside both, but adjacent to them, can be described as particularly contested. The level of contestation varies depending on factors within both fields, but it is a permanent state, and the conditions of entry into that unofficial sub-field are certainly governed by both practical and tacit requirements of cultural capital. That is to say, successful entrants to both the fields of drama/theatre and education need to have clearly pre-defined levels of cultural capital and symbolic power in both fields<sup>vi</sup>. This poses an immediate and practical difficulty for this project, insofar as it is clear that the definition of field is not wide-ranging enough to encompass the breadth of participants in drama as education in Ireland. Some other critical description is necessary to describe the

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<sup>vi</sup> A clear example of this would be the advertising criteria for a Lectureship in the Department of Arts Education in the author's home University. Successful applicants must hold qualified teacher status, a degree at Master's level or higher, a high level of proficiency in Gaeilge and a proven artistic portfolio in their chosen field e.g. music, dance, visual art or drama. What is clear from these pre-requisites is that qualification and experience are required that pertain to both the educational field and an artistic field i.e. membership of both is a requirement.

site of drama as education, particularly in Ireland, as the concept of field is not broad enough to encapsulate all positions held.

Some benefits do attach themselves to the peripheral location of the so-called sub-field of drama as education, i.e. the common area where the field of education and the sub-field of drama/theatre intersect. These are intrinsically tied in with the power orientation in the field – something Bourdieu refers to as the heteronomous principle. An artistic field of cultural production is always a site of struggle between two principles: the heteronomous principle, which is ‘favourable to those who dominate the field economically and politically’; and the autonomous principle, whose advocates are those least endowed with specific capital, and ‘tend to identify with a degree of independence from the economy, seeing temporal failure as a sign of election and success as a sign of compromise’ (1993, p.40). Therefore those position-takers in fields of cultural production that have most autonomy, are those that have the lowest status, but are such by choice and indeed their integrity demands it. The extent of autonomy in the field has implications in terms of the overall power orientation of the field:

The state of the power relations in this struggle depends on the overall degree of autonomy possessed by the field, that is, the extent to which it manages to impose its own norms and sanctions on the whole set of producers, including those who are closest to the dominant pole of the field of power and therefore most responsive to external demands (i.e. the most heteronomous); this degree of autonomy varies considerably from one period and one national tradition to another, and affects the whole structure of the field. (Bourdieu 1993, p.40)

These are relevant distinctions with regard to field on several levels. They indicate that autonomy is valued within a field, but the most autonomous agents

have little control over the shape or direction of the field. The most autonomous agents are also least responsive to external political forces. Looking to what is written of the history of drama as education<sup>vii</sup> it can be argued that practitioners have generally operated in highly autonomous positions, or occasionally entirely external to, both the field of drama/theatre and the field of education. The most heteronomous position-takers have been academics (because of the symbolic power granted by their institutional affiliation), with dual membership of the fields of drama/theatre and education. These have been few in number, and this has had concomitant difficulties for the status, validity and growth of drama as education as a discrete sub-field in itself or within either of the parent fields. In real terms, the strongest voices in drama as education have rarely occupied robustly heteronomous/powerful positions within either education or theatre.

### **Community as a ‘Soft’ Critical Concept**

Bauman’s work on community (2001) offers perspectives that maybe useful at this juncture. He notes that a community is oft-regarded as an inherently safe and good thing, and that invariably it is thought of as a warm, secure, trusting and happy environment (pp.1-2), but then proceeds to banish this ideal immediately:

There is a price to be paid for the privilege of ‘being in a community’ – and it is inoffensive or even invisible as long as the community stays in the dream. The price is paid in the currency of freedom, variously called ‘autonomy’, ‘right to self-assertion’, ‘right to be yourself’. Whatever you choose, you gain some and you lose some. Missing community means missing security; gaining community, if it happens, would soon mean missing freedom. ... There is little we can do to escape the dilemma – we

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<sup>vii</sup> cf. Bolton 1985, 1998

can deny it only at our peril. One good thing we can do, however, is to take stock of the chances and the dangers which solutions proposed and tried have in store. Armed with such knowledge, we may at least avoid repeating past errors; we may also avoid hazarding ourselves too far along the roads which can be known in advance to be blind alleys (2001, pp.4-5).

Bauman's concept of community is necessarily a soft and post-modern one, in direct comparison with Bourdieu's hard-edged, modernist theory. Bauman resists the temptation of charting community in terms of characteristics, instead describing it in fluid and open language. Words that recur in his discourse are communality and freedom, identity and security. The former two draw particular emphasis, and Bauman suggests that although they may clash, 'a compound lacking one or the other won't make for a satisfactory life' (2001, p.60).

Although Bauman is speaking from a broader cultural and sociological perspective, the parallels with academic and artistic communities are clear. Throughout, he deals with the changing nature, and arguable death of communities in the early twenty-first century, specifically noting issues of, *inter alia*; security, management, decline, alienation or escape of the successful, identity and idolatry, communality, equality and inclusiveness, impossibility and segregation, disengagement and excess within communities. Inherent in his argument is a dual idea of myth; that functional communities utilise myth as a regulatory device for teaching and control, and that in the absence of functional communities, and therefore commonly subscribed-to myths, what remains is a void that is filled by other fears:

...except for the writers of scholarly books and a few politicians (as a rule politicians not currently in power), you hear little about 'existential insecurity' or 'ontological uncertainty'. Instead, you hear a lot and from everywhere about the threats to the safety of streets, homes and bodies, and what you hear about them seems to chime well with your own daily

experience, with the things you see with your own eyes. (Bauman 2001, p.146)

The possible parallels with the community in question here are even more pronounced when one speaks specifically of drama as education, which has a documented history of fissure, dispute and exclusion. Community as an all-inclusive concept for drama as education appeals, especially when other definitions suggest community as distinctive, small and self-sufficient<sup>viii</sup>.

It can be argued that drama as education in Ireland has been more of a community than a field in the sense Bourdieu would understand one, and that some of the fluctuations Bauman finds characteristic of community have indeed taken place within drama as education. Of specific interest to this work are ideas of leadership, shared beliefs, induction into and exclusion from the community, acceptable behaviour and progression within the community.

There are numerous counterpoints between community and field that help cast each other in sharp relief. Older members of the community who wish to perpetuate a 'way of life', and for whom status is derived from experience as opposed to expertise, have a high level of status and a greater level of power within a traditional community. With the changing nature of community, this is being supplanted, and power is intimately associated with language. Rhetoric functions freely within community. Membership of a community is tied up with the identity of the community. Within the construct of this work, identity is held to be a post-colonial concept, principally derived from Bhabha (1990, 1994) but

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<sup>viii</sup> Bauman (2001, p.12) cites these characteristics as belonging to Redfield's definition of community, but dismisses them as unnecessarily limiting.

also fundamentally tied-up with understandings of human agency (cf. Taylor 1985). With regard to contemporary community, essentially those who identify themselves as being part of a community are indeed part of that community. This is in distinct contrast to more traditional ideals of community, where entry and membership would have been closely guarded by those of status and power.

Security as a specific concept in community is of particular interest, given that one of the features of a community of drama as education is the security it has offered its members to practice in a safe environment, where the broader field may not have been particularly accepting of their 'revolutionary' work.

Ultimately it is security that defines Bauman's model of community. Security has to be balanced against freedom, and this is an equation has become problematic, particularly because of local and macro-level politics in the last decades, which has seen freedom severely compromised in every community. This changing situation echoes Sennett's analysis of the decline of public man (1976), which has resulted in a move towards the individual:

Insecurity affects us all, immersed as we all are in a fluid and unpredictable world of deregulation, flexibility, competitiveness and endemic uncertainty, but each one of us suffers anxiety on our own, as a private problem, an outcome of personal failings and a challenge to our private savoir-faire and agility. We are called ... to seek biographical solutions to systemic contradictions; we look for individual salvation from shared troubles.

If there is to be a community in the world of the individuals, it can only be (and it needs to be) a community woven together from sharing and mutual care; a community of concern and responsibility for the equal right to be human and the equal ability to act on that right. (Bauman 2001, p.144 & pp.149-150)



Despite Bauman's assertion that community is in trouble, it remains the most appropriate collective term to ascribe to drama as education, specifically in Ireland. It is more open and inclusive than field, yet remains governed by a range of principles, if not rules. Used in conjunction with each other, field and community together represent a substantial means of identifying and critiquing the site of the research.

### **Community, Acting and Public Spaces**

Essential to the idea of community is acting, not only in the theatrical sense, but primarily in social terms. Within a community, it is incumbent on members to act and to fulfil certain communal roles and functions, which collectively ensure the continuance and survival of the community. There are many commonalities and parallels between this concept and acting in drama/theatre, and indeed many facets of a shared history.

Castoriadis (1983) discusses the creation of a democracy in the Greek *polis*<sup>ix</sup>. Of most significance in his analysis are two key and fundamentally interlinked ideas: (i) the creation of a public space caused by general participation in politics; which is brought about by (ii) the direct participation of the people in the processes of decision-making and governance. This occurs in three distinct ways: the people versus 'representatives'; the people versus the 'experts'; and the community versus the state (1983, pp.276-277). With regard to the latter,

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<sup>ix</sup> The *polis* can best be understood as the city-state of Athens in ancient Greece.

Castoriadis suggests that '(t)he community 'receives itself', as it were, from its own past, with all that this past entails' (1983, p.279).

This aligning of community with the idea of pro-active (acting) participation by those who can avail of a public space, finds resonance in the work of Williams (1961, 1975) and Sennett (1976). Williams expands the notions of drama outwards and looks to broader society for parallel activities. He finds that the key characteristics of drama transcend the permeable boundaries of the art and the field, and that drama is a 'specific, active, interactive composition: an action, not an act' (1975, p.11).

Sennett's seminal book (1976) ostensibly comes from an opposite direction to drama/theatre – politics and sociology. It focuses on the contemporary imbalance between private and public experience, and the decline Sennett perceives in involvement in political life. In examining the classical concept of *theatrum mundi*, Sennett looks closely at the idea of society as a theatre, and within that, the concepts of playing and acting, not just in the dramatic sense, but in the social sense also:

(I)n modern society, people have become actors without an art. Society and social relations may continue to be abstractly imagined in dramatic terms, but men have ceased themselves to perform. (1976, p.314)

At the heart of this disjuncture for Sennett is the loss of the ability to play and to be playful. This, in turn, prevents people from taking roles and playing parts, something that is essential to the functioning of a democratic society. What is interesting for Sennett, however, is the fact that society is essentially dramatic, and the good functioning of a society demands both a recognition of that fact, as

well as the recognition by people in that society, that they are social actors with roles to play. One of the most important of these roles is that of engaging in what Sennett identifies as speech (1976, pp. 80-87), but which can be interpreted as being broader than that, and actually more akin to discourse.

What Castoriadis, Sennett and Williams foreground is the fundamental and ancient relationship between drama/theatre and community. In contemporary terms, this relationship can be understood in terms of representative democracy having elected representatives. Representative theatre as it existed in the *polis* had elected actors. This important equation, and the deeply-ingrained relationship it implies between acting in society and acting in drama, is fundamental to this project. A core question that lies partly inside, but mainly outside the parameters of this study, and one that certainly requires further elucidation, is as to how drama as education operates as an artistic/educational community, but also how it operates within social communities. As will be seen in later chapters, it is part-inside because the broader social function of drama is core to many of the claims made for drama as an educative force, and, it will be argued, some of the fundamental myths of drama as education. The scale of the broader debate is very substantial as it runs to the root of the fundamental purposes of drama.

Community as a concept is permeable. It is open to a variety of definitions and interpretations. It interacts easily with drama/theatre. People interact easily with it. For all these reasons, it is particularly appropriate for deployment as a critical term in this work. Drama as education in Ireland is fluid and loosely defined. It is

a community occupied by people of variety of different backgrounds, qualifications, educational and artistic motivations. However, what can be said to tie the community together is a recognition of the power of the social actor (agency) as well as a desire to find a voice and partake in public spaces. Ultimately, what is unique about drama as education is that efficacious outcomes and change are generally sought after – social acting is core to the work of much drama as education.

For all these reasons, particularly the foregrounding of agency and language, community is an entirely appropriate concept in this work. On its own, however, it is insufficient. The concept of field brings a more structural approach, and a clearer idea of how ideological and political forces work within a site. For that reason, the combination of field and community will be utilised to describe the site of the work throughout the thesis. Although community will be the primary descriptor, an understanding of the manner in which field operates within a specific *habitus* is essential in identifying ideological, political and linguistic structures.

### ***Habitus* in Field and Community**

Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* comes into play here in placing the individual in that equation. For Bourdieu, *habitus* is the concept which describes how the subjective is 'inculcated by the possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions inscribed in ...objective conditions' (1990, p.54). Put simply, this means that people learn from the contexts in which

they grow up and live, patterns of thinking and ways of categorising and understanding the world (as well as becoming disposed towards acting in certain ways). A subjective worldview is shaped by the objective context – objective in the sense that it exists external to the people who make it up and exists even if not perceived by the people involved. Bourdieu identifies sociological reflection as a mechanism for overcoming some of the determinism of the *habitus*:

It is true that sociological analysis hardly makes concessions to narcissism and that it carries out a radical rupture with the profoundly complaisant image of human existence defended by those who want us at all cost, to think of themselves as ‘the most irreplaceable of beings’. But it is no less true that it is one of the most powerful instruments of self-knowledge as a social being, which is to say a unique being ... (It) offers some of the most efficacious means of attaining the freedom from social determinisms which is possible only through knowledge of those very determinisms (Bourdieu 1998, p.ix).

*Habitus*, therefore is central to any concept of community in that it represents the objective (external) context that is not perceived unless such a process of analysis is engaged with.

*Habitus* has particular importance when seeking to examine the manner in which a range of ideas are associated with both field and community, as it provides a critical ‘bucket’ for holding these ideas. In this project, the *habitus* of drama as education includes ideas of, *inter alia*: aesthetic traditions, discourse and surfaces of emergence, and pedagogic approaches. Each of these will be dealt with throughout this work in greater detail, but some sense of the critical tone needs to be set at this point.

Neelands (1998) identifies two different aesthetic traditions prominent in drama as education: the literary and private aesthetic tradition most often associated

with performance of plays in a theatre; and the oral, communal aesthetic tradition of ‘non-literary and participatory entertainment’ which ‘stresses the processes of production and the quality for participants of the immediate shared experience’ (1998, p. ix). He holds that much drama as education practice falls within the latter tradition, and needs to be recognised as such. Recognition of these traditions has implications in terms of how myths within the field of drama/theatre and community of drama as education are understood.

Neelands also contributes some ideas regarding the manner in which pedagogies in drama as education can be understood within the context of the social world in which they operate:

(The) pre-condition that drama exists as a part of our social world rather than removed and isolated from it suggests that there is a distinction to be made in terms of pedagogic alternatives. Intra-aesthetic approaches which isolate students’ experiences of drama from the broader social and cultural worlds in which they dwell may tend towards valuing, and therefore give primacy to, students’ artistic and technical skill development. Para-aesthetic approaches which acknowledge the social/artistic dialectic and which are intended to develop a broader range of social and cultural learning may tend towards giving priority and primacy to the personal and social development of the students. (Neelands 2004, p.50)

This differentiation between inter-aesthetic and para-aesthetic pedagogies offers this project an insight into the pedagogic construction of the *habitus* of drama as education, and another lens with which to critique the relationship drama to society.

Finally, the discussion on field, community and *habitus* has provided a clearer critical basis within which to identify both the discourse and discursive

formations of drama as education, but more importantly, the site of the surfaces of emergence. This is central to locating the Point of Entry Text (PoET) so central to the effective functioning of a critical *bricolage*.

### **The Location of the Researcher**

Before proceeding to develop the mythic *bricolage* in detail, it is worth taking a moment to place the researcher in the site of the research. Unlike traditional positivistic and empirical research, no claim of neutrality or objectivity is made on the part of the author in work such as this. Quite the opposite: the researcher comes to a *bricolage* with as much ideological and political baggage and intent as any other consumer of myth. What can be taken from Barthes is that in choosing to function as a mythologist, s/he possesses a little more awareness of the existence of myth, but is also somewhat uncaring as to the impact of myths. In the context of the discussion immediately preceding this, the author in this specific case is a member of the community of drama as education in Ireland, but also holds positions in both the field of drama/theatre as a practicing theatre artist, and in the field of education as a University academic. Clearly, therefore, this work takes place within a context of the author not wishing to compromise his security and membership of the community of drama as education, but also seeking to acquire more cultural capital with the fields to which he belongs. Inevitably these factors mould and shape the construct and outcomes of the work, as well as his individual *habitus*.

What is important is that in this effort at identifying and demythologising myths in drama as education, it is recognised that this work is itself implicitly mythic in nature.



**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**MYTH IN ACTION**

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This chapter contains four distinct elements that brought together will give the reader an understanding of a critical mythic *bricolage* in action within the community of drama as education. Initially some consideration will be given to myth itself and the importance and relevance it holds for this project, as well as a development of the rationale for choosing it as the locus for a critical *bricolage*. Next will follow a discussion as to the specific manner in which the *bricolage* is constructed, and a delineation of the various elements that constitute it, with some explanation as to their importance. The third section of the chapter will discuss particular aspects of operation of the *bricolage*, propose a typology of functions in critical myth, and engage with the discourse surrounding deciphering myth and demythologising/remythologising. Finally, an analysis will be presented of an attempt at demythologising from the history of the community of drama as education. The critiques of David Hornbrook will be examined with a view to examining the inherent possibilities and pitfalls of engaging in such a process.

### **Myth as a Critical Concept**

Mythmaking is an everyday practice which permeates the discourse of ... communicators. There is no need to consider myths as expressions of some special form of consciousness or to situate belief in myths within a psychopathology of the irrational. There is nothing strange about myth-making. There is nothing wrong with it. It is an entirely normal way of making (...) events intelligible in the light of ideological beliefs. Some stories acquire importance within a social group over a long span of time. Others have only the most ephemeral currency. But the production and the reproduction of mythopoeic narratives are constant features of (...) life. (Flood 2002a, p.188)

The field of myth and mythology is a broad church. Its evolution and genealogy have been well charted by Dalziel (1967), Kirk (1970), Righter (1975),

Blumenberg (1985), Dorty (1986), Schrempp & Hansen (2002), and Segal (2004) amongst others, but that is not of primary concern here. As noted in the introductory chapter to this work, the concept of myth to be employed throughout is one derived from the idea of myth as story as identified in Kearney (2002). A more current and applied understanding of myth specific to this work needs now to be developed. It will be akin to the characterisation put forth by Flood above, which clearly foregrounds the fundamentally ideological and principally discursive nature of myth.

Some work has been done in attempting to give character to a modern-day idea of myth. Sheehan (1987), in exploring the relationship of story to society, suggests five essential characteristics of myths as ‘stories of special symbolic significance’ (1987, p.17). She holds that myths are: (i) prototypical stories – stories that emphasise the fundamental themes, characters and situations of human existence; (ii) paradigmatic stories – stories that are told to shed light on other stories and link the past and present; (iii) resonating narratives – stories that capture the essence of human existence and offer choices or answers to fundamentally human issues; (iv) normative narratives – stories that describe a society’s history and legitimise its values and rules; (v) synthesising stories – stories that capture the essence of a time and place, emphasising the best and worst in order to bring some clarity to the forces at work. A reading of this taxonomy supports the idea that there is little by way of randomness or fortuity in myths, and that in essence they are deeply entwined means of understanding, ‘a society’s geographical conditions, technical means of production, social division

of labour, political structures of power, state of scientific knowledge, etc.’ (1987, pp.17-18).

Sheehan makes the point that myths no longer have the same explanatory power in contemporary society as they once held, and that the challenge for society lies in the manner in which they are dealt with *as* myths once discovered. For her, the test in modern life, ‘is not to demythologise, but to remythologise’ (1987, p.21), and by doing so, to appropriate and interpret myth in a manner such that it is true to modern life and rationality. This important distinction between ‘demythologizing and remythologizing’ is one also emphasised by Saper (1997, p.1) in his work on artificial mythologies, which he identifies as cultural inventions. This distinction suggests a useful understanding regarding the relationship of myth to modern-day life. It also necessitates a point of methodological clarity in this work, specifically the distinction between demythologising and remythologising, which shall be returned to later in this chapter.

Returning to Sheehan, she develops the idea of remythologising by suggesting that old myths had a rooted meaning and unifying power that contemporary myths cannot have for society. The reason for this is the fragmentation and complexity of modern societies, the openness and mobility of the people living in them, and the lack of clarity and cohesion in comparison to what would have been seen in the societies from whence the old myths originated (1987, p.24). The importance of Sheehan’s understanding of myth is not in terms of what it suggests with regard to the nature of societal change, but rather that it suggests

that contemporary myths are, by comparison weak and not as widely shared as would have been previously. She goes somewhat further by suggesting that there exists another category of myth in addition to the ones described above; stories as 'pseudo-myth' or 'myth faking' (1987, p.25). This category of myth is intrinsically tied up with television, film, marketing and media hype, and the suggestion is that contemporary myths clearly belong to this category. Even though they fulfil some basic functions of myth, they are barely such because they produce neither illumination nor catharsis, but link with the mass psyche in some manner, and constitute certain points of reference. At first glance, these perspectives of contemporary myths as weakened in comparison to old myths, may seem to run contrary to the argument that an understanding of extant myths is seminal to a full understanding of the community of drama as education. However, it in fact underlies the fundamentally surreptitious nature of myths, in that instead of being banished or becoming outdated and left aside, they in essence morph into something more applicable to the societal/cultural situation within which they exist. Although this may seem, at first glance, to be a natural process, it is intrinsically linked with ideological concerns, and ultimately, human agency.

The difficulties of employing myth in any academic usage are evident upon reading Nagy (2002). He charts three historical reasons for the lack of singular and uniform development of the concept of myth, and establishes the extent of its multiformity. Interestingly in terms of this work, he suggest that in order for myth to be saved, it needs not be read simply as text or metaphor, but in a much broader framework of myth as performance and ritual.

Perhaps the closest alignment to the understanding of myth proposed in this work is that put forth by Flood (2002a, 2002b) in his work on ‘political myth’. Noting the importance of myth in contemporary societies, he suggests that instead of the widespread theoretical definition and discussion it might have expected to attract, the field of myth has gone through what he describes as a process of ‘slow crystallization’ (2002a, p.3). Flood differentiates between sacred (as he refers to the general theory of myth) and political myth, with only the latter concerning him, and in particular ideas of the form and function of political myths. Central to his discussion is the importance of ideology and discourse in myth, and he argues for ‘a model of political myth which places it at the intersection of the theory of sacred myth and the theory of ideology’ (2002a, p.5). He proposes a definition of a political myth as ‘an ideological marked narrative which purports to give a true account of a set of past, present, or predicted political events and which is accepted as valid in its essential by a social group’ (2002a, p.44). Central to the operation of political myth is the discourse of the field, something he describes as ‘mythopoeic political discourse’, and which he understands as, ‘an ideologically marked narrative which purports to give a true account of past, present, or predicted political events’ (2002b, p.181).

Expanding upon this, Flood suggests that ‘ideological marking’ is at the heart of political myth, which for him means that the ‘narrative discourse carries the imprint of the assumptions, values and goals associated with a specific ideology or identifiable family of ideologies’ (2002a, p.42). His definition of political myth, centred as it is around this ideologically marked discourse, essentially

means that it is a fluid communicative process (as opposed to a static entity), which is as much about reception as well as (re)production. This demands that the telling and receiving of myth be recognised as central to understanding the myth, thus foregrounding issues of human agency, truth and motive as being central to an understanding of myth. Whilst Flood's work is focussed on contemporary political (understood in the sense of political theory) myths, he acknowledges that other areas of political endeavour are also enveloped by his theory, as can be seen most clearly in his explanation of the genesis and reception of myth. Regarding the latter, Flood asserts that the question to be asked regarding reception is why receivers (social actors as he terms them) choose to believe in a particular set of beliefs. In answer, he firstly cites the epistemological framework of the receivers, and the manner in which the ideological colouring of the myth fits with the receivers' prior and embedded understanding of the world. More interestingly, Flood suggests that the reception of myth is intrinsically linked with Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic power': the status of the teller of the story and the institutional credibility of the discourse has huge implications for the benign reception of that particular myth. Finally in terms of reception, Flood suggests that the social positions and dispositions of the actors in relation to the proximate teller of the story and the sources s/he cites in support of the myth. All of this is not without difficulty from the point of view of deciphering myths:

The complexity of these combinations of factors raises enormous methodological problems for empirical analysis of historical cases, but it does not invalidate the argument that explanation in terms of rational behaviour should precede, or at the very least be taken into account alongside, recourse to explanation in terms of the irrational (Flood 2002b, p.188)

Flood's work is of importance to this thesis on a number of levels. It is the closest theoretical usage of the idea of myth to that proposed in this work, albeit concerning a field that holds a very different ideal of discourse and rhetoric than that of education and drama, and a somewhat less grounded understanding of myth. Of primary importance to this work are his ideas of the origins of myth and the reception of myth, particularly the links established with ideology, rhetoric, social capital and symbolic power:

(M)yth-making is the partner of theory. Only by fitting events together as historical interpretations and predictions is it possible to "demonstrate" that particular values, beliefs, and goals have efficacy in the social world. By implication, myths purport to prove that validity of values by showing they can be enacted. Mythmaking is therefore indispensable to ideology. (Flood 2002b, p.189)

Some other examples exist in literature illuminating contemporary critical usage of myth. Young's collection of essays on white mythologies (2004), seeks to contest and transform Eurocentric ideas of theory and history, from a staunchly critical post-colonial perspective. He regards many of the white mythologies as stories through which the West sustains itself. Whilst the notion of mythologies is used in a largely axiomatic sense throughout, what emerges from Young's work is a clear sense of a critical myth and mythologies similar to the understandings employed in this work. In utilising and critiquing the writings of Sarte, Foucault, Althusser, Said and Bhabha amongst others, Young is in no doubt as to the mythic nature of history:

History, far from constituting a privileged form of (historical) knowledge is simply the myth of modern man, and merely amounts to a method of analysis. ... Like all models of knowledge, ... history requires a code to analyse its object, and for most historians this code consists in chronology. The use of chronology in historical writing, or in literary history, gives the illusion that the whole operates by a uniform, continuous progression, a linear series in which each event takes its place. History is thus a process of a continuous unfolding. (2004, pp.79-80)



### **A Working Definition of Myth**

Given the descriptions of contemporaneous critical myth noted above, and the theoretical intent of this project, as described in Chapter Two, it is appropriate at this stage to give some flesh and clarity to the notion of myth propounded here.

This thesis proposes to understand myth as a surreptitious and purposeful invention, which is controlled by forces for particular reasons, through specific fora and media. It is something that is not as easily classifiable or dismissed as lay understandings of the word imply. The myths discussed in this work are not to be understood as entirely manipulative or oppressive in a fundamentally negative fashion. In fact, in many cases they are essential to the continued orderly survival of the particular fields and community in which they operate. It is proposed that their unquestioned existence allows the particular beliefs and innate understandings perpetuated by the myths to propagate in an unquestioned and unchecked manner. The implication of the unseen nature of myth is that change instigated after a process of demythologising is very often seen as quite unnatural and indeed as going against some of the fundamental forces and beliefs of that field or community. Seminal to furthering an understanding of the nature of myths is the location of myths, as discussed in the previous chapter, most especially the manner in which symbolic power and cultural capital (through human agency) operate within the fields of theatre and education, as well as the less rigid but no less pervasive norms that govern the specific community of drama as education. Also of central importance is the operation of discourse

within these groupings, which it is held controls the myths. Of particular relevance is the idea of rhetoric as discourse. Myths are often identified and represented by what is not present, thus echoing Williams' selective tradition (1961). The idea of myth presented here is also influenced by Kuhn's (1962) account of scientific revolution, particularly his understanding of paradigms, and the idea of crisis precipitating a paradigm-shift.

What is important to note at this juncture is that the usage of myth proposed here is a constructed one as befits the methodological stance of *briocleur* introduced earlier. However, as emphasised by Kincheloe and Berry (2004), due cognisance of reductionist tendencies and watchfulness of simplistic explanations must be taken in order to guard its usage throughout this work:

...a complex set of variables does not lead to the same outcomes in some linear cause-and-effect manner. Scholars in such analysis transcend reductionistic assumptions such as that only one entity can inhabit the same locale at the same time. In a complex ontology patriarchy can coexist in the same time and space with religion, socio-economic class, gender, sexuality, geographic place, and a plethora of other social dynamics. In such a context the notion of causality and the nature of social interconnections become far more complex concepts and processes to research ... the way researchers discursively define a social phenomenon produces the form the notion takes. (Kincheloe & Berry 2004, p.31)

What will be striven for in this thesis, in keeping with its admittedly modernist mission, is that myth will become both the notion and the form of this work. That is to say, the pursuit of myth (with the ultimate if potentially fruitless aim of demythologising) is the primary aim of this project, whilst it is clearly recognised that this work is in itself an exercise in mythologising. This will be borne out most fully in the final chapter.

The earliest usage of *bricolage* as an academic term emanates from Lévi-Strauss's seminal volume, (1966). Lévi-Strauss is also deeply concerned in the same volume with myth, meaning and history. As part of his description of myth as a mechanism for the preservation 'of methods of observation and reflection' from the past (1966, p.16), he notes that 'the characteristic feature of mythical thought is that it expresses itself by means of a heterogeneous repertoire which, even if extensive, is nevertheless limited' (1966, p.17). This extensive repertoire, according to Lévi-Strauss, means that mythical thought is a kind of intellectual *bricolage* which allows mythical reflection to reach 'brilliant unforeseen results on the intellectual plane' (1966, p.17). It is the argument here that the converse is also true, and that in order to decipher mythical thought, an intellectual *bricolage* of substance is required.

### **The Construction of a Critical Mythic *Bricolage*.**

In arguing the existence of a mythology of drama as education, and in suggesting that the methodological stance of *bricoleur* can be utilised to decipher, and indeed, replace myths, a lucid mechanism is necessary. This is even more so the case when the terrain involved, as noted in the previous chapter, is contested.

Utilising the concept of fractals from chaos theory allows Kincheloe and Berry to conceptualise the multifarious and multilayered manner in which such a complex mechanism might be put in place:

... (I)n the pursuit of rigour in complexity bricoleurs expose the mechanistic ontologies that view the world as a fixture with moving parts. In their place they study fractals, questioning how such entities might extend the interpretative frameworks of social, psychological, and educational research. The concept of fractals emerged in the effort to confront the complexity of the physical world – in particular, the

irregularity of the geometric shapes found in the natural world. The phenomenal aspect of fractals is that they are found not only in the whole of the entity under study but also in the smaller and smaller parts of the entity in question. Thus, the parts of the structure, at any level, are similar to the shape of the structure as a whole. (2004, p.48)

As can be seen, the manner in which the critical mythic *bricolage* is constructed (and thereafter operated), is of paramount importance, given that rigor and complexity are the two most important defining characteristics of any *bricolage*. Kincheloe & Berry warn however, of the possible misinterpretation of these characteristics, insofar as they could be equated with methodological terms such as sequential, linear, logical positivism and scientific rationality. A rigorous and complex *bricolage* can be achieved without recourse to any or all of these viewpoints. From the outset of this project, the intention in constructing a critical *bricolage* has been to allow the level of flexibility necessary in order to critique the myths of drama as education, at the same time moving substantially beyond an interpretivist stance described in Chapter Two, which is centred solely on the concerns and understandings of the researcher – that would only serve to uncritically remythologise.

The foundational understandings, parameters and principles of this *bricolage* have been drawn from the theoretical work discussed in Chapter Two. The centrality and framing of myth as a critical tool, the intent of provoking action (acting), and communicative nature of the *bricolage*, and the epistemological questioning and importance of discourse have emanated from the writings of Barthes, Habermas and Foucault respectively.

Looking back at the discussion in the previous chapter on the difficulties in identifying the discourse of the field and community, and indeed, even in identifying the community of drama as education, a further difficulty exists in finding a way of identifying and accessing myths in order to begin a process of demythologising. For this reason, it is necessary to both focus and ground the analysis. Given the location of the researcher, Ireland is the obvious site of such an exploration. As noted briefly above, accessing a *bricolage* through fractals has difficulties attached, and for that reason Kincheloe and Berry propose the idea of a Point of Entry Text (PoET). A PoET can be understood as ‘the pivot, the axis for the rest of the application of the *bricolage*. ... It is anything that has or can generate meaning’ (Kincheloe & Berry 2004, p.108), and can be as diverse in form as a photograph to a theory, a movie to a flyer. In essence, the PoET serves a dual-purpose as both the gateway through which the *bricolage* can be accessed, and also the foundation-stone on which the *bricolage* is constructed.

Kincheloe & Berry’s understanding can be further developed through a number of metaphors (2004, pp. 108-109) they utilise concerning the PoET, which aptly illuminate both the nature of the PoET and the relationship of the PoET to the *bricolage*. Foremost amongst these is the metaphor of **Trees and Forest**: The PoET, as they understand it, has a poststructural nature that has no constant beginning, middle or end. The PoET is constantly subject to different readings:

Each threading through from the different areas of the *bricolage* map challenges the truths, knowledge of the original PoET but never destroys it. Each threading through of any one or many of the areas of the *bricolage* map exposes in the original PoET the complicity, conflicts, contradictions, exclusions, injustices and so forth of the knowledge, beliefs, values, discourses and the representations and practices they produce. New knowledge, truths are foregrounded. Changes in discourse

and practices are implied and hopefully change. (Kincheloe & Berry 2004, p.108)

The second metaphor of **Overhead Transparency** involves the recognition on the part of the *bricoleur* that the PoET is always the bottom text, and that every transparent layer (e.g. postcolonial theory, performance theory) overlaid on it changes its meaning but allows the reader of myth to see it in a different light, but through which the original PoET can be clearly seen. Importantly, the various layers applied can be easily removed and are available for recovery.

**Hypertext** as a metaphor implies an understanding of the PoET as being linked and webbed to various areas of the *bricolage*, discourses, etc. Links can be followed forward, and then paths retraced by using a metaphorical back button.

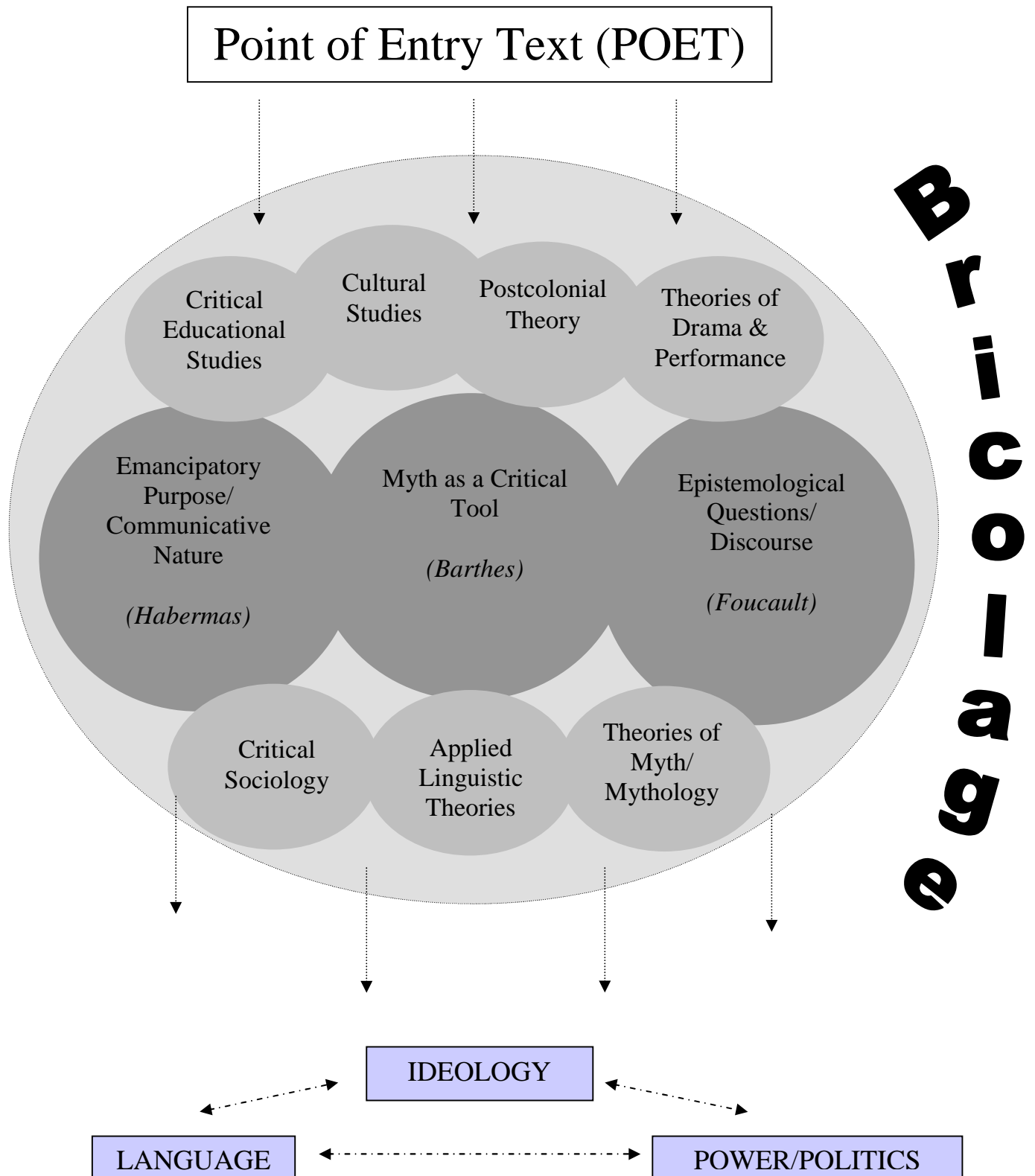
Continuing in the vein of multimedia, the final metaphor is that of a **DVD**. It suggests that the structure of *bricolage* is akin to the menu of a DVD movie, in that the author or reader can access different menus and revisit previously deleted and hidden items.

The most appropriate PoET with which to construct and access a critical mythic *bricolage* are the national primary curriculum documents for drama in the Republic of Ireland (Govt. of Ireland 1999a, 1999b). This is the first national curriculum for drama at any level in Ireland. The choice of these documents is in keeping with the emphasis of this thesis on discourse and discursive formations in the construction of knowledge. The local nature of that discourse is an important factor in restricting the PoET to the Irish curricular documents. The

concept of community is another vital factor in the choice of documents. The PoET is clearly located within the community of drama as education, and because of its official nature, it also holds cultural capital and symbolic power within both the fields of education and drama/theatre.

In order to draw clear links with the core theories of the *bricolage*, it is proposed that the PoET can be understood as being analogous to Barthes' understanding of a *mythical signifier*. It is further held that the Irish curricular documents under examination can be recognized as *monuments* in the archaeological sense, and that they therefore stand as valid understandings of discourse, in its own volume (Foucault 1972, p.155). The methodological importance of these analogies lies in the critical insights the PoET as *monument/discourse/mythical signifier* can give in terms of Ireland in particular, and the broader community of drama as education in general.

It is only by looking to the specific and applied elements of the critical mythic *bricolage*, that the process of creating a variety of readings of the PoET can begin. The elements are visually represented in *Figure 4.1*, and necessitate a brief rationale as to their inclusion. A fuller validation will be evident in their application in the following chapters, where they are brought to bear sometimes individually but often collectively on the PoET. The central elements (the bedrocks) have been introduced previously, and they in essence set the tone for the *bricolage* and underpin the directionality of the readings for all the reasons delineated in detail in Chapter Two. The first tier of the other theories comprises



**Figure 4.1 – Elements & Operation of the Critical Mythic Bricolage**



those which are of macro importance in the construction of an archaeology of critical readings of the PoET, and in problematising the various layers. Theory from the field of **cultural studies** forms an integral part of the *bricolage*. Its importance lies in allowing the work to move beyond relativist and fixed understandings of the world and society (as captured in Foucault's understanding of knowledge as *monument*), and in emphasizing the importance of concepts such as language, ideology and power/politics to meaning-making and the classification and transmission of knowledge. Writings from the cultural studies tradition allow for the question of local versus universal, which recurs in so much dialogue concerning art to be fully dealt with. The importance of this relatively new arrival as an academic discipline to a post-structuralist perspective is evident:

Cultural studies have the bounce, the gusto and irreverence of excellently bad babies, but of course the staid and settled ways of well brought-up and obedient subjects beckon from the safety of the ivory towers. At times the language of the subject tends, as I have said, towards a mouth-filling and brain-stuffing elaborateness; at other times towards a wild, street-rapping argot; at worst towards a neat and sitting-up-nicely kind of storytelling, dressed up for fashionable display as case-study, action-research or ethnography. (Inglis 1993, p.18)

Postcolonial theory is emergent from the broader church of cultural studies, but is of sufficient importance to this project to warrant equal billing. It is essential to this project in that it allows particular ideals of identity, nationhood, tradition, self and other to be subject to critical examination. The importance of the postcolonial in reading a PoET from a nation with as troubled and complex a history as Ireland cannot be underestimated in terms of coming to grips with the values and beliefs encompassed and perpetuated in potential myths. The centrality of postcolonialism for all questions Irish is captured by Flannery:

(B)oth Ireland and postcolonialism must engage in a process of critical symbiosis, in which specific Irish discourses neither dictate the terms of postcolonial critique nor allow any brand of postcolonial typology to theoretically essentialize Irish cultural and political discourses. Equally Irish cultural studies must eschew any form of critical 'isolationism' and must remain receptive to the mutually enriching exchange of ideas with alternative cultures and nations. (2004, p.26)

**Critical educational theories** are vital constituent elements of the *bricolage* in that they allow for a critique of the educational premises and ideals explicitly and implicitly embodied in drama as education. In keeping with the critical mission of this *bricolage*, the critical educational theories to be drawn upon are implicitly reflexive, emancipatory and change-orientated in the tradition described by Carspecken & Apple (1992), Popkewitz & Fendler (1999).

**Theories of drama and performance** in the broadest possible sense also form part of the top-tier in the construction of the *bricolage*. These can range from the earliest writings in the Greek tradition to relevant contemporary work, particularly in the arena of performance theory, cultural anthropology and applied theatre. Their fundamental importance lies in allowing the work to question varying understandings of drama, theatre, performance and process as understood in the discourse of the PoET. Specifically, emergent critical research in the areas of drama education and applied theatre will be looked to in that they have begun to describe varying readings in drama as education: Taylor (1998, 2003), Gallagher (2002, 2007), Thompson (2003), Neelands (2004, 2007), Nicholson (2005), Ackroyd (2006), O'Toole (2006).

The second tier of theoretical inputs has a more supportive role, but its elements are vital cogs in addressing specific questions that arise from the work, as seen from the previous chapter:

The importance of **critical sociological** perspectives has already been seen in the previous chapter in attempting to describe ideas of field (Bourdieu 1993) and community (Bauman 2001) as they pertain to drama as education. Also mentioned previously are concepts such as Flood's (2002a, 2002b) understanding of political myth. These are vital in constructing a site for the research as well as a solid theoretical base for the work. Ultimately these facilitate the project in conceptualising how outcomes distilled from demythologising the PoET at hand can be addressed and made relevant for a broader audience.

**Applied linguistic theories** allow for the definition of discourse within the domain of drama as education. Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2001) and rhetoric (Banaji *et al* 2006, Richards 2008) provide the tools with which to critique the manner in which ideas of discourse, language, rhetoric and metalanguage are treated throughout the project.

**Theories from the field of myth and mythology** have been cited already, and will be drawn upon more substantively later in this chapter. They are vitally important in bringing clarity to the meaning of myth as put forth in the dissertation, as well as in defining a typology of myth and examining constituent elements of the operation of myth. This is an essential cog in understanding the manner in which the critical mythic *bricolage* operates.

*Figure 4.1* above has its limitations as the schematic expression is more linear and structural than the manner in which the *bricolage* operates in reality. It is also not as fluid in terms of aiding understanding of the layering of multifarious readings that is at the heart of *bricolage*. However, it is appropriate given that this *bricolage* itself has several distinct tiers of construction, each of which has a specific role in its operation. This model can also be defended in the light of the modernist intent but post-structuralist approach that this work embodies.

### **The Operation of a Critical Mythic *Bricolage***

The way in which *bricolage* operates is by subjecting the ‘Point of Entry Text’ (PoET) to examination by exposing it to, and then threading and re-threading it with the variety of lens (the elements of the *bricolage*) noted above. In this way critical readings are constructed regarding the discourse of drama as education in Ireland. These readings serve to illuminate the matrix of language, power/politics and ideology and the manner in which they drive myths in drama as education. The importance of the readings (emanating through the discourse resultant of the *bricolage*), is fundamental to this project as they lay bare the forces that create, establish, perpetuate and replace myths. These forces are widely recognised throughout the arena of critical theory.

**Language:** Discourse is seen to be inclusive of several aspects of language Fairclough (2001, pp.16-23). Included in these are understandings of language as

written text, as verbal text and as visual text. The relationship between language and society is as described by Fairclough:

My view is that there is not an external relationship 'between' language and society, but an internal and dialectical relationship. Language is a part of society; linguistic phenomena *are* social phenomena of a special sort, and social phenomena *are* (in part) linguistic phenomena. ... But it is not a matter of a symmetrical relationship 'between' language and society as equal facets of a single whole. The whole is society, and language is just one strand of the social. And whereas all linguistic phenomena are social, not all social phenomena are linguistic – though even those that are not just linguistic (economic production, for instance) typically have a substantial, and often underestimated, language element. (2001, p.19)

He continues by explaining the centrality of language (as a form of text) within any given social discourse, and by describing the manner in which all language serves not only as part of the discursive text, but is a recognisable aspect of social practice in itself:

... I shall use the term *discourse* to refer to the whole process of social interaction of which a text is just a part. This process includes in addition to the text the *process of production*, of which the text is a product, and the *process of interpretation*, for which the text is a resource. ... No account of the processes of production and interpretation can be complete which ignores the way in which they are socially determined, which brings us to the third implication of seeing language as social practice: that it is conditioned by other, non-linguistic, parts of society. (2001, p.20)

The implications of this recognition and understanding of language - as being a deeply meaning-laden and richly indicative series of social texts - and its implications for the excavation of an archaeology of myths, are evident from Foucault:

The question posed by language analysis of some discursive fact or other is always: according to what rules has a particular statement been made, and consequently according to what rules could other similar statements be made? The description of the events of discourse poses a quite different question: how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another? (1972, p.30)

Language in this project is therefore not only a gateway text for accessing the discourse of the fields and community. It is also worthy of considerable analysis in itself, particularly its function (closely allied with human agency) in creating and perpetuating myth. Some further discussion of the importance of language, and in particular rhetoric as a linguistic form, will follow presently.

**Power/Politics:** The relationship between discourse and power is no less complex or important, and is salient on a number of levels. It is a relationship that runs to the heart of all critical projects as has been seen in the earlier chapters of this thesis. Habermas (1984, 1987) and Foucault (1970, 1972, 1980) give particularly detailed consideration to the concept from the perspectives of philosophical thought and discourse analysis.

Fairclough (2001) emphasises the importance of the enactment and exercise of power in discourse (or communication), as well as acknowledging the existence of power relations behind discourse. Citing Habermas (1984) in discussing the former, he suggests that power relations exercise constraints on discourse in three particular ways: in terms of contents of discourse, resulting in an effect on knowledge and belief; in terms of the social relations people enter into in discourse, resulting in an effect on social relationships; and in terms of the subjects of discourse, resulting in an effect on social identities. All three of these types of power-driven constraints on discourse contribute to aspects of mythology as it is understood here. Essentially they constrain the manner in which a field/community operates discursively by controlling who can ask the

questions, who can questions be asked of, and about what can the questions be asked. Thus, a series of constraints exists whereby those who are interested in demythologising have to be willing to question official knowledge and belief, strain social relationships and to shirk predefined social identity in order to reveal myths. The issue of power relations in the discourse (communication) of drama as education occurs on a numbers of levels, unsurprisingly given the range of institutions and agencies involved. In the case of Ireland, an initial list would include: primary school Students and their Parents, primary school Teachers, primary school Principal Teachers, primary school Boards of Management, primary school Patrons<sup>x</sup>, the Schools Inspectorate, the Minister for Education and Science, the Government Department of Education and Science (DES), the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP), the Association for Drama in Education in Ireland (ADEI), Universities and Colleges with drama or/and education courses, individual University/College Lecturers in drama and/or education, Arts Centres, Theatre Companies, freelance drama practitioners, speech and drama teachers, etc. The difficulty of offering a simple explanation of how power operates in drama as education becomes plain to see. The sheer range of agencies involved at the levels of governance and administration make the task difficult. It becomes even more complex when the role of individual practitioners (agents) is considered, especially at the most fundamental level of operation, such as the power-relations at play in a teacher's choice of role within a drama lesson (Styslinger 2000).

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<sup>x</sup> Each Irish primary school is established under the patronage of a recognised authority. Traditionally this was one of the established churches, but in recent times this had broadened out to include multi-denominational and non-denominational groups.

When considering the power relations behind discourse, it is clear that they are sometimes visible, sometimes hidden. All are powerful, intricate to decipher, and always difficult to change or unseat. Friere's work (1973, 1985, 1996) eloquently gives voice to the struggle to subvert and change political oppression through a move away from 'verbalism' and toward an open and critically-informed dialogics (1996, pp. 68-76). However, it is within the concept of ideology that the power relations driving discourse (and therefore myth) can be most easily identified.

**Ideology:** McLellan (1995) suggests that ideology is the most difficult concept in the social sciences to pin down. As with the question of power and politics, it is more importance in the context of this work, to describe the parameters of the idea, than to attempt to define the specific concept. Ideology is understood here as being intimately related to the concept of power, and accessible through language and therefore discourse.

Eagleton notes six different ways of defining ideology, progressively refining and sharpening focus with each. These range from the first category of relatively benign and general 'material process of production of ideas, beliefs and values in social life' (2007, p.28), to later classifications which hold that ideologies promote and manipulate ideas and beliefs. This is done with a view to reinforcing the interests of the dominant groups in society, often through distortion or dissimulation. Eagleton's final category 'retains an emphasis on false or deceptive beliefs but regard such beliefs as arising not from the interests of the dominant class but from the material structure of society as a whole' (2007,



p.30). That is, ideological perspectives have become so deeply embedded in the ‘natural’ operation of the societal structure that they are virtually indistinguishable as being ideological in nature. This is the understanding of ideology most closely aligned to the usage of myth proposed in this work – ideology has become so naturalised and hidden that it appears normal in the form of the myths described here – the reader of (ideology) myths has to work hard to decipher whose interests are being supported and perpetuated through any given ideological stance.

Fairclough seems to support this, and claims that ideology is most effective when its workings are least visible. He plays with the notion of ‘common sense’ as defined by Gramsci, and suggests that if one were to become aware that aspects of ‘common sense’ behaviour were sustaining power at one’s own expense, it ceases to be ‘common sense’ and therefore, to function ideologically. This implication of this is that the analyst of discourse will struggle to identify ideology:

(I)nvvisibility is achieved when ideologies are brought to discourse not as explicit elements of the text, but as the background assumptions which on the one hand lead the text producer to ‘textualise’ the world in a particular way. Texts do not sprout ideology. They so position the interpreter through their cues that she brings ideologies to the interpretation of texts – and reproduces them in the process! (Fairclough 2001, p.71)

The relationships described here between language, power/politics and ideology and discourse are again modernist in terms of their interplay, something that is not without its critics. McLellan (1995, pp.61-70) in particular questions the ability of discourse analysis to show how ‘patterns of language’ reflect relations of power on the ground. He criticises the tendency to focus on writing without

examining the conditions of production or interpretation; the emphasis on the autonomy of language over speech; and the tendency to emphasise the consensual rather than conflictual aspects of society, thus legitimating the social order rather than criticising it.

Given these criticisms, it is important to re-emphasise at this juncture that the manner in which discourse will be interpreted in this project is as part of a *bricolage* which although certainly modernist in stance, is not as structuralist as would be the norm in critical discourse analysis. The strength of the *bricolage* is in the plethora of critical lens employed and in the explicit intent of the *bricolage* in foregrounding exactly that which is conflictual, and which is so for a reason.

### **The Relationship between Myth and Knowledge**

The claim at the heart of this thesis is that much of the knowledge of drama as education can be regarded as mythic. That is not to say that it is ‘wrong’ or ‘dangerous’, but simply constructed and purposeful. Myth is not analogous to knowledge. It operates at a much more advanced level, in that knowledge is readily identifiable and accessible, whereas the very nature of myth is such that it remains surreptitious and hidden. Knowledge is myth that has been enriched with suitable language and ideological intent thus making it (i) visible, (ii) valuable in terms of cultural capital, and (iii) official in terms of the status of knowledge. Obviously it remains laden with political intent (translated through the ideological intent of the knowledge), and is controlled by human interests, which can only be deciphered after a process of demythologising. Myth in essence

serves to describe knowledge; whether at an official *documentary* level or at an informal level of practice; and whether from a theoretical ‘thinking’ perspective, or from a practical ‘working’ one.

Revisiting the core theories from Chapter Two in the work of Barthes, Habermas and Foucault, what is evident from them is the centrality of language, discourse, power and ideology to all three in conceptualising knowledge, albeit in different ways. In order to bring some cohesiveness to the manner in which a critical mythic approach to drama as education may pay dividends, we must therefore strive to reconcile some of the apparently divergent views of what the relationship between these core ideas are in order that some clarity can be ultimately brought to the relationship between myth and knowledge.

For Barthes, language is laden with signs to be deciphered, and it can be justifiably claimed that he treats language as a carrier of sign, but of no real consequence beyond that. Moriarty notes a fundamental problem with this usage for the researcher:

The myth does not (...) operate directly on the real, but in signs: its language is a metalanguage. But if this is so, then the mythologist, producing language out of an existing metalanguage, is one stage further removed from reality, like the Platonic artist copying a natural world that is itself a copy. (Moriarty 1991, p.29)

A situation where the researcher is removed from the language is one that differs quite substantially with Habermas’s understanding, where language is something concrete and leads to knowledge, as opposed to hiding it. This language arises as a result of discourse in the real world, where people communicate in order to solve problems and find solutions, thus creating knowledge through that process.

For Foucault, as outlined in detail earlier, discourse is of primary importance, and each and every speech and language act engages in discourse formation, whereby innumerable yet finite meanings, and therefore knowledge, is created.

On the surface, it seems that these quite profoundly and explicitly expressed theoretical positions, are irreconcilable. Yet, this is not a barrier in terms of driving a critical mythic lens forwards. Moving beyond the somewhat constraining actuality of the language ‘act’, what they provide us with is a range of opportunities for analysis and understanding. These allow us to propose and examine a range of truths that can be held with regard to the language (both written and verbal) of drama as education. What results is a *bricolage* that contributes readings that reveal the manner in which language contributes (Foucault), or permits/facilitates (Habermas), or perpetuates and conceals (Barthes), knowledge within the field. As with the construction of the *bricolage*, this perspective is entirely in keeping with an overall post-modern critical approach.

### **A Typology of the Function of Myth**

A wide-ranging corpus of literature surrounds theories of myth, much of it residing in a variety of fields such as philosophy, theology, literature, anthropology, psychology, sociology as well as mythology. Segal (2004) traces many of these traditions and suggests it useful that the reader understand that there is no study of myth, as there is no myth; theories of myth are always attempts to understand myth within a much larger domain (2004 p.2). This

perspective is a useful one here given that the idea of myth central to this work is essentially utilitarian in nature. Segal further suggests that the manner in which myth can be understood is through three common criteria that pertain to all these studies regardless of field of study, namely questions of origin, subject-matter and function.

Theories of myth are numerous in the arenas of theology and comparative religious studies and also anthropology, with arguably the majority of the earlier writings focussing on study of the ancient Greek myths and their relevance to contemporary scholarship. Twentieth century studies show a distinctive evolutionary trajectory in scholarly writings regarding the manner in which myth is understood, notably in the work of Dalziel (1967), Kirk (1970), Righter (1975), Lévi-Strauss (1978), Blumenberg (1985), Saper (1997), Segal (1999, 2002, 2004), Schilbrack (2002), Schrempp & Hansen (2002). Moving away from earlier taxonomical, descriptive and interpretative studies, much of the work of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century/early 21<sup>st</sup> century is concerned with trying to come to grips with whether myth has a future in the face of the new-found challenges of science, although as Segal notes, the majority of these writers quickly came to see myth 'as almost anything but an outdated counterpart to science, either in subject matter or in function' (2002, p.3). Core to this newly evolved tradition is the idea that the study of myth holds meaning and importance for a broader community of readers, on an individual and societal level:

Myths concern us not only for the part they play in all primitive, illiterate, tribal and or non-urban cultures, which makes them one of the main objects of anthropological interest; not only for the grip that versions of ancient Greek myths have gained through the centuries on the literary culture of the western nations; but also because of men's endearing

insistence of carrying quasi-mythical modes of thought, expression, and communication into a supposedly scientific age. (Kirk 1970, p.2)

Segal (1999) suggests that the greatest challenge to myth has come from social science (particularly anthropology), which attempts to ‘explain the origin and operation of the physical world’ (1999, p.19). The origins of myth are not particularly challenged by science, but its assumed functions are thrown open to question. In looking at the responses to this challenge, Segal is dismissive of those who have ignored science or chose to dismiss science as itself mythic. Equally, those who have come to accept the view that science is the reigning explanation of the world are accused of having chosen ‘surrender’ or ‘regrouping’ as their *modus operandi* (1999, p.19). He notes that the danger in such an approach is that myth immediately becomes other than a ‘literal explanation’ of the world. Segal suggests that this presents a choice; in that, ‘(e)ither the function of myth becomes other than that of explanation, or the subject matter of myth becomes other than the literal one’ (1999, p.19). The implicit criticism is that taking either of these approaches serves to somehow diminish the importance or integrity of myth. Tylor is held by Segal as a prime example of those who in choosing this approach deny myth a future.

Whilst the relevance of this line of debate to this project is arguable, nonetheless there are importance areas of resonance here in defending and further refining the usage of myth in this thesis. First amongst these is to note that what is being anticipated here is indeed a ‘regrouping’ of myth to serve the purposes of natural science, in the case of this work, the fields of drama and education. Secondly, Segal’s criticism demands a statement noting that whilst the usage proposed here

is about explanation of myth, it will not serve to progress more traditional understandings of myths, but will develop and extend understandings of the importance and function of myth in contemporary society.

Many have sought to classify and theories understandings of myth, and Kirk's volume (1970) is the forerunner of a new generation of studies in mythology, in that it seeks to critique previously limited approaches, and offers a broader range of insights into the relationship between myth, religion, ritual, folktales, etc. It takes time in exploring the impact of Freud's work on dreams and Jung's understanding of symbols on understanding of myths, as well as paying particular attention to Lévi-Strauss's structural study of myth. Kirk proposes a detailed typology of functions in myth, in which he holds there to be three major classifications. The first type is primarily focussed on narrative and entertaining functions, acknowledging that 'all myths are stories and depend heavily in their narrative qualities for their creation and preservation'. These myths seem not to have speculative or operative content, and have been 'preserved through their appeal as neat and simple tales or as elaborated relics of the past' (1970, p.254), perhaps to glorify great leaders. Kirk's second category is that of operative, iterative and validatory myths. It ranges from myths used on ceremonial/ritual occasions (operative); to myths used to provide authority for customs and institutions, and to reaffirm beliefs (iterative & validatory). It is suggested that this category overlaps with types of legendary myths, but differs in that the purpose of legend is rooted in narrative, patriotism and aetiology. The final grouping in Kirk's typology of mythical function is that of speculative and explanatory myths. These are the more complex and elaborate myths those that

are operative and iterative, and have a more deep-rooted function than simply the provision of an aetiology. They have discernible illusory and evaluative functions:

The kinds of solution that speculative myths can offer are these: the removal of a problem, or its effective disguise, by a tale that implies it to be irrelevant or simply pretends that it is not there; the resolution of a contradiction ... which entails the introduction of a mythical factor that serves to mediate polar extremes; the domestication, by reducing impersonal forces to personal and thereby more comprehensible forms, of repellent or unassimilable aspects of nature ...; and the use of other kinds of allegory in which the transposition of a problematic situation into a fresh set of terms seems to reveal new associations and relationships that make the problem less severe. (1970, p. 259)

In this, Kirk seems to be attributing manipulative and arguably oppressive characteristics to his final category of myths, albeit couched in the language of exploration rather than conclusion. He clearly raises issues of power and human agency, and though these are never adequately addressed in the work, they are seminal to the discussion here.

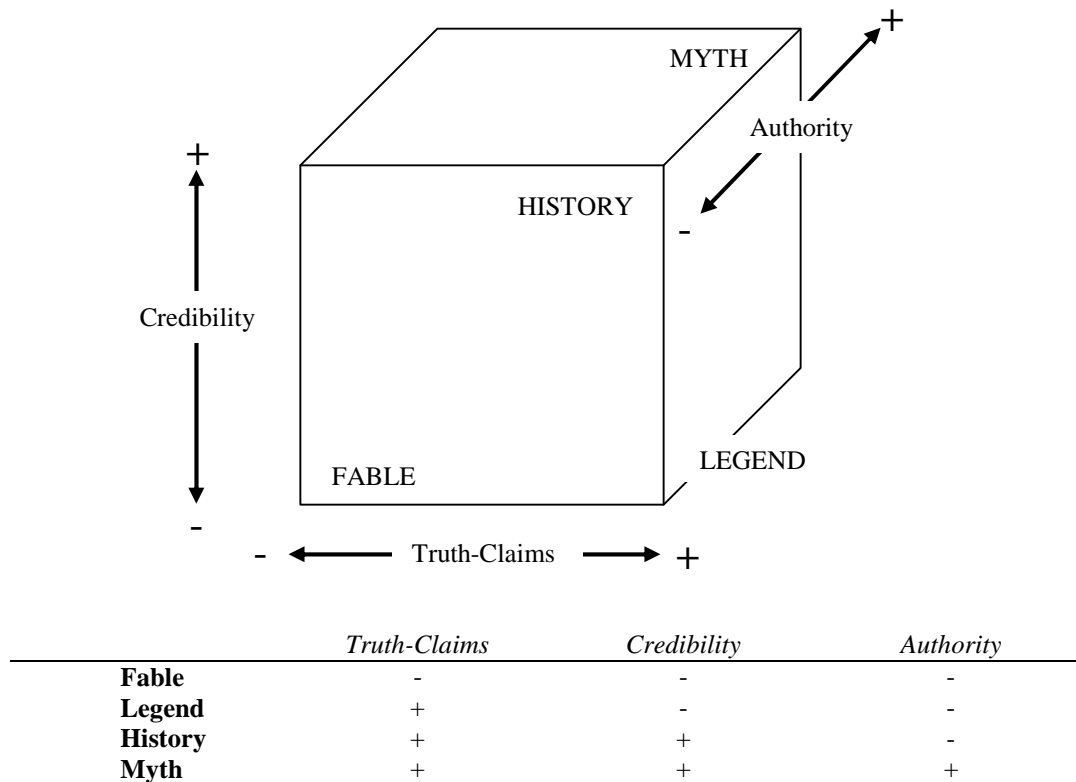
In a more recent examination of the relationship between myth and philosophy, and the potential uses of philosophy in understanding myth, Schilbrack (2002) critically examines the contribution of the religious historian, Bruce Lincoln. He notes that Lincoln understands myth as a form of discourse, 'that shapes and legitimates social boundaries and classifications' (2002, p.6), through a process of both ideological persuasion and sentiment evocation. One can be studied independently of the other. The latter refers to a myth's ability to persuade and evoke sentiment, and is closely related to language's ability as an act of discourse to evoke sentiments of affinity or indeed estrangement. Schilbrack suggests that ultimately, philosophy's potential contribution to the study of myths is in



investigating the persuasive power of myths – ‘what it is that myths try to persuade people of, how they do so, and – significantly – they do not bracket but retain the evaluative categories of whether the content of the myth is ultimately rational (or pseudorational) and moral (or pseudomoral)’ (Schilbrack 2002, p.7). This differentiation between two core functions of myth runs to the heart of Lincoln’s understanding, and Schilbrack argues that it allows the student of myth to study both elements independently of the other, although a complete analysis of myth can only result from the study of both.

Lincoln develops this basic understanding, according to Schilbrack, into a more complete typology by introducing the notion of ‘authority’. This ‘refers to a feature of a myth’s status as a paradigm’ (2002, p.8). A paradigm in this model can be looked upon as a story that, ‘comes to exercise such a compulsion and moving quality that people have the sense that the meaning of their lives depends on the significance of the story, its re-enactment, or its remembrance’ (2002, p.8). The importance of this understanding is that levels of credibility, truth claims and authority (which can be seen from their status as a paradigm) in myths, are a vital factor in revealing the social function of the myth. Lincoln expresses this thinking schematically in a diagram demonstrating his classification of narratives, reproduced here in *Figure 4.2*. Schilbrack notes that the value of this model lies in the fact that:

... myths make claims to truth, that these claims are found credible, and that these perceived truths give the myths their authority to provide models or characters for social life. ... Whatever authority myths have to serve as a paradigm or a charter depends upon their persuasiveness. If a myth loses its credibility or is no longer seen as making truth-claims, then it also loses its authority and is ‘down-graded’ to the status of a legend or a fable. One might say that the credibility of the truth claims made by the myths is an ingredient in their social function. (2002, p.8)



**Figure 4.2 – Classification of Narratives**  
(Lincoln cited in Schilbrack 2002, p.9)

As in Kirk's typology, Lincoln's clearly suggests a level of functionality that is inherently tied up with power and ideology. The fundamental question that must be posed is in relation to the manner of progression to the final two stages of Lincoln's model; the progression from a narrative having truth-claims to also having credibility and authority. That is, the process of a cultural narrative (fable or legend) becoming paradigmatic and thus making the transition from being something distinctly cultural to being a matter of knowledge (history and myth).

The challenge in describing a typology of the contemporary myths proposed in this work is somewhat more complex. Kirk (1970) expresses his typology in a clearly hierarchal fashion based solely and independently (though with some

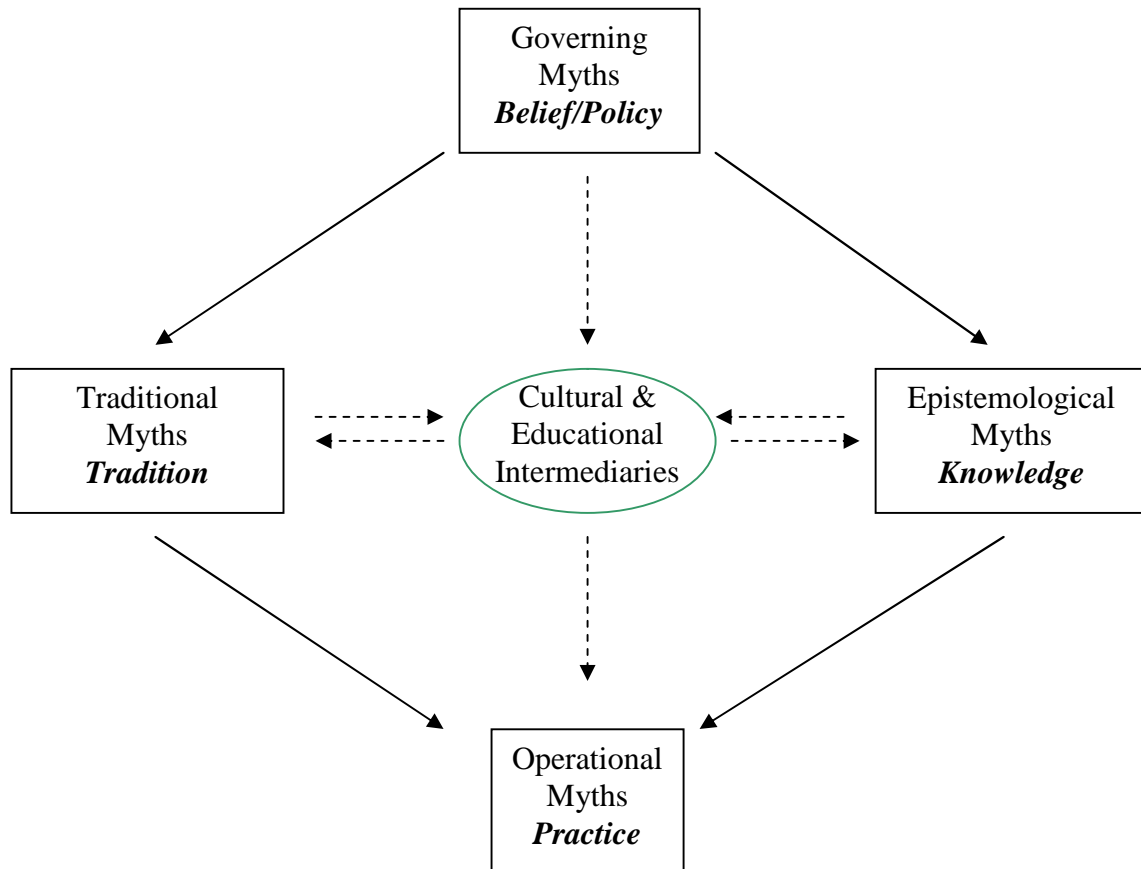
overlapping features) on levels of function. Lincoln's model (*cited in* Schilbrack 2002) is more cumulative in nature, with the functionality of types of narrative deeper or higher up in the model reliant on their ability to incorporate all levels of 'believability' evident in classifications lower down. Its applicability here is increased by the manner in which it treats myth as a discursive entity. Both, however, are based upon fundamentally traditional notions of myth as premised upon narrative (regardless of their ideological function), and therefore neither are entirely appropriate to this project.

### **A Proposed Typology of Contemporary Myths**

The typology of contemporary myth proposed here began life by having importance only in the context of facilitating ease of discussion and classification. As it developed, it began to take on some of the hierarchical characteristics of Kirk's typology and the cumulative and functional features of Lincoln's. It is described schematically in *Figure 4.3* below.

The model identifies four categories of myth: governing myths, traditional myths, epistemological myths and operational myths. Each of these categories have differing qualities and functions within any given field and community, and they also have differing ratios, quantities and types of strengths in terms of power/politics, language and ideology. The manner in which they relate to each other, as well as communicate and influence the pivotal cultural and educational institutions of that field/community are critical. A brief explanation of each will suffice at this point in the work. A fuller understanding of each will only become

manifest through the creation of a detailed archaeology of the myths of drama as education in Ireland, in the following chapters.



**Figure 4.3 – A Proposed Typology of Contemporary Myths**

**Governing myths** have ultimate strength in power, and therefore also language and ideology within any given field and community. They are frequently identified in discourse as representing policy and specifically in rhetoric as embodying the core attitudes, beliefs and ‘way of life’ of a field or community. They are commonly felt to be beyond question as they are at an official and unquestionable level. Governing myths have clear systemic status and are at the hierarchical pinnacle of this model. Even identifying these myths as such

represents a subversion of sorts, and is resisted strenuously by the system in question. Governing myths direct the establishment and philosophical, ideological and political orientation of the official cultural and educational intermediaries within the field and community of drama as education, which in turn ‘officially’ shape the operational myths.

**Traditional myths** represent the essence of ‘unofficial’ knowledge in this model. They have particular strengths in language, thus the type of knowledge encapsulated in traditional myths is very often orally based, and communicated both directly and by example to those joining the community or the field. New entrants are initiated into the particular tradition which they are joining, and very often satisfactory behaviour within that tradition is dictated by the extent to which new entrants uphold those traditions. Therefore those that seek to revise or diminish aspects of these ‘sacred’ myths are clearly recognised as revolutionaries and run the danger of being ostracised from the community/field. Traditional myths are tolerated by the agencies that control governing myths, and even if they are not entirely ideologically conformist with governing myths, as they certainly do not subvert the political/ideological intent of the superior category. They have a horizontal relationship with cultural and educational institutions, in that they directly inform (through unofficial knowledge) the manner in which these institutions operate, and very often traditional myths are most readily identifiable through close analysis of the discourse of cultural and educational institutions. The influence of traditional myths is most obvious in terms of the direct relationship they have upon operational myths.

**Epistemological myths** represent the ‘official’ knowledge of a community/field.

Within this typography they occupy an equitable status-level to both traditional myths and the cultural and educational institutions through which both are primarily communicated. Epistemological myths have definite and clear strengths in ideology, and therefore have a powerful basis. They represent the ideological manifestation of the power relations at play in governing myths, and therefore the knowledge contained in them is official and unquestionable. New entrants to the field and community learn epistemological myths in the aforementioned institutions and their successful entrance into the field/community is governed by their willingness to perpetuate, uphold and defend epistemological myths. Only accepted members of the field/community of substantial standing and levels of symbolic power, can reveal and subvert epistemological myths without fear of exclusion and their theories being disparaged and ignored. Those who successfully extend the range of epistemological myths and gain acclaim for doing so, must have ideological acceptance within the governing myths, as well as being content not to demythologise existing myths. Similar to traditional myths, these myths impinge directly on the practice of individual members insofar as all practitioners have been educated within the paradigm they define.

**Operational myths** occupy the lowest point in this typography but conversely have the most direct influence on the day-to-day operation of a community/field. These myths represent the reality of daily practice for individual workers ‘on the ground’ in cultural and educational intermediaries of a field/community, and are therefore shaped largely by all the other areas of myth as described in this

typography. Operational myths have strengths in language, though they are not as symbolically powerful as any of the other areas of myth. Again, something of the converse is true in that they describe and dictate so many of the experiences people have within both education and culture. The knowledge represented by operational myths is unofficial insofar as it exists at the level of practice and experience, and differs for every practitioner, but remains within the parameters of the governing, traditional, and epistemological myths. Fundamentally, operational myths are initially shaped by practitioners operating with licence as a result of the inculcation they have undergone in order to gain entry as a practitioner to the field/community i.e. through acceptance of the traditional and epistemological myths. As practitioners attain more symbolic power within their field or community, they have greater freedom to define their own individual operational myths, as long as in doing so they do not overtly subvert the other categories. This is an important point, as operational myths which openly venture outside the functions described by the three ‘superior’ categories are quashed as being illicit or ineffective by those who hold symbolic power with the field and community. However, for those practitioners that chose to refrain from openly engaging in discursive activity, there is substantial operational leeway (depending on the traditional/epistemological tolerance of the cultural and educational intermediaries). Demythologising operational myths is at once the easiest and most difficult of tasks facing the demythologiser. This is because the nature of operational myths is such that they frequently change and modify, and as noted are only generally represented at the lowest levels of discourse – with longevity and they right political supporters, they can eventually become traditional and epistemological myths. The difficulty in their identification and

deciphering is accentuated by the fact that they very often change from individual to individual practitioner, and therefore reside solely within single classrooms, theatres and studios.

### **Myth and Rhetoric**

Rhetoric is a challenging concept. In contemporary lay terms it is aligned with the idea of highly emotive and persuasive argument, designed and contributed to win the day for the speaker. In classical oratory, rhetoric is a more measured contribution, intended to influence the thought and conduct of an audience, but with the emphasis on an artful as opposed to emotive speech-act. It is language used for a purposeful intent. It is a direct appeal to the reader/listener where the language itself moves, and not the substance of the argument being made.

Rhetoric has been a distinguishable feature of drama as education over the course of its formative years. Much of this is due to the manner in which the community rapidly developed from the 1960s to the 1980s, and the dearth of research that accompanied this exponential expansion. In place of reliable studies, the voices of master-practitioners were fore-grounded and received much attention. This in turn, achieved cultural capital for those practitioners, particularly in the practice of drama in education. The difficulty for this project is that these ‘performances’, whilst important to recognise, are impossible to re-capture.

However, the written language of some human agents, operating within the community of drama as education at that time, can also be regarded as rhetorical,



and gives a clear indication of the nature of the rhetoric of the day. Hornbrook<sup>xi</sup>, one of the chief dissenting rhetoricians, in describing Heathcote's<sup>xii</sup> contribution to the early development of drama in education, suggests that, 'it was helped in no small measure by the charismatic qualities of her remarkable presence which began to bewitch the increasing numbers of drama teachers who came to watch and participate in her workshops' (1998a, p.13). He continues to describe the panegyrics that flowed in, 'devoted to the words and deeds of their mentor' (*ibid.*), and notes the 'tendency to conflate personality and agency' (1998a, p.19) on her part, and indeed on the part of Bolton<sup>xiii</sup>. Bolton's analysis of the situation, albeit from an obviously different perspective, is equally as colourful:

There had always been a danger that Dorothy's work might invite a suffocating guru-worship, a gooey, gluey, unquestioning sycophancy that precludes criticism of any kind. ... Some who tried to question its fundamental principles risked being charged with heresy. One such heretic was David Hornbrook. His perception was that the only way to challenge the Heathcote orthodoxy was to declare war, and to set himself up as an alternative leader. He demanded of his followers that they should see drama education as 'black or white'. It was 'either/or'. ... It may be the very apparent cosiness of the Heathcotites' self-congratulatory armour that drives any challengers to absurd, overstated positions. (Bolton 2003, p.176)

This brief insight into bewitching charisma, panegyrics and heretics, indicates that regardless of how one chooses to define rhetoric, the influence of this

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<sup>xi</sup> David Hornbrook is a former actor, teacher and director. He is currently a Chief Inspector with the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED)

<sup>xii</sup> Dorothy Heathcote (b. 1926) is widely acknowledged as one of the most innovative practitioners and charismatic exponents of the Drama in Education tradition. A Lecturer at the University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, her name is synonymous with conventions such as 'Teacher in Role' and 'Mantle of the Expert'. Bolton's biography (2003) contains a detailed account of her substantial contribution to the idea of drama as education.

<sup>xiii</sup> Gavin Bolton's name is inextricably linked with that of Heathcote as they collaborated throughout the 1970's and 1980's. A Lecturer at the University of Durham, Bolton's contribution was more orthodox and scholarly, and he has contributed a range of important writings to the community (1979, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1992, 1998, 2003).

particular brand of heightened language within this *bricolage* needs to be briefly explored.

Barthes, in seeking to define the delivery of myth, looks at the issue of differentiating between, and understanding the relationship between myth and rhetoric. He associates rhetoric intimately with bourgeois myth, and suggests it can be understood as a 'set of fixed, regulated, insistent figures, according to which the varied forms of the mythical signifier arrange themselves' (1972, p.150). These myths are regarded as transparent, this being necessary in order not to affect the 'plasticity' of the signifier, but are already established enough to allow for 'an historical representation of the world' (1972, p.150). Barthes characterises mythic rhetoric as having seven principal figures; (i) the inoculation; (ii) the privation of History; (iii) Identification; (iv) Tautology; (v) Neither-Norism; (vi) the quantification of quality; and (vii) the statement of fact. Each of these figures is portrayed as having a quite specific *modus operandi* in terms of the delivery of myth, all of them intimately associated with issues of language. This fits clearly with Barthes' assertion that myth is both a second-order semiological system and a meta-language, i.e. a linguistic system superior to language. Rhetoric feeds into the construction of meta-language. Barthes' usage is characteristic of a structuralist understanding, which sees rhetoric as a universal feature of language and discourse, given its existence in everyday life (Macey 2000).

Rhetoric has taken on a new role within discourse analysis as a result of the continued development of critical theory. Macey suggests that rhetoric can be

understood as ‘the art of persuasive communication and eloquence’ (2000, p.329). He charts the central paradox of the many theories of rhetoric whereby its figures and tropes are regarded as ornamental speech that departs from a linguistic norm, alongside the fact that orators strive to learn them; whilst at the same time noting that rhetoric is used in everyday life by those who have no training in the art of persuasion. Contrastive rhetoric focuses upon the shape of academic discourse beyond the sentence (Ostler 2002), whilst the importance of the discourse community and audience is also noted (Burgess 2002). Kincheloe and Berry (2004) acknowledge the potential significance of rhetorical analysis as part of the construction and operation of a *bricolage*. Richards (2008) offers a comprehensive critique of rhetoric, including its potential within a critical tradition of research. She explores the idea of rhetoricality, a contemporary form of rhetoric, which has come about as rhetoric itself was no longer regarded as a resource that could be called upon by the skilled speaker or writer to persuade an audience:

On the contrary it was understood that language is so profoundly and pervasively figurative that the tropes and figures cannot be rationalised and controlled at all: that is, ‘rhetoric’ could not be reduced to an art. (2008, p.116)

Banaji *et al* (2006) offer an applied consideration of rhetoric in a report on behalf of Creative Partnerships, which examines nine rhetorics of creativity in action, looking at ideas as diverse as the concept of ‘creative genius’ to ‘creativity as a social good’. Their focus in viewing discursive positions and practices regarding creativity is similar to the usage proposed here, in that they argue:

... that creativity is to be seen more productively through these rhetorics than through narrow and unchanging characterisations that seek to endorse particular definitions, making different stances more entrenched and more difficult to reconcile and debate. (2006, p.5)

Given the breath of this project and the constrained parameters of the report, detailed rhetorical analysis of the PoET is not feasible. However, it is proposed here that a critical understanding of rhetoric is central to the function of the *bricolage* in order to develop as full a reading of language and discourse as possible. Rhetoric, therefore, can be understood as a form of heightened language and therefore discourse; but also as a meta-language, i.e. a language used to make statements about other languages. This dual dimension to its nature, suggests that rhetoric itself is imbued with political and ideological meaning, and created for reasons of cultural capital and therefore position-taking and status within a field. Where possible rhetorical language will be identified as such, but what is of greater consequence is that the function of rhetoric is recognised.

### **Myth and Human Agency**

The centrality of the concept of human agency to the operation of myth has been noted at several points in this chapter thusfar. It is important to the argument to understand both the philosophical concept of human agency as well as the manner in which the creation and perpetuation of myth is progressed by human agency in order to potentially facilitate demythologising.

In general terms human agency refers to the ability of human beings to make choices and to engage in and fulfil those choices freely. In this work human agency specifically refers to the particular role and function that individuals have in the creation, operation and perpetuation of contemporary myths, as well as in

the process of demythologising and remythologising. It is implicitly tied up with power and ideology. Significant questions arise, however, with regard to the level of awareness of that involvement on the part of (i) individuals, or (ii) groups within a field/community, and to what extent motive can be ascribed to them.

In looking to the concept of human agency as a key philosophical debate, some insight can be gleaned from the work of Taylor (1985). Taylor links the core concept of human agency with desire and self-evaluation in the first instance, suggesting that our capacity as humans to evaluate our desires is an essential feature in the mode of agency that we recognise as human:

It must be made clear that an agent who could not evaluate desires at all would lack the minimum degree of reflectiveness which we associate with a human agent, and would also lack a crucial part of the background for what we describe as the exercise as will. ... We think of the agent not only as partly responsible for what he does, for the degree to which he acts in line with his evaluations, but also as responsible in some sense for these evaluations. (Taylor 1985, p.28)

Allied to self-evaluation and responsibility in Taylor's expression lie understandings of identity and articulation. Identity comes about as a result of certain evaluations made by us which are inseparable from ourselves as agents: an understanding of responsibility can only come about by considering the manner in which evaluations are actually articulated – 'to give a certain articulation is to shape our sense of what we desire or what we hold important in a certain way' (1985, p.36). Therefore, for Taylor, the key in understanding human agency lies in assessing man's ability for self-evaluation of, and responsibility for, his actions, but this is only achievable only insofar as these are

made manifest through man's identity, which in turn is only accessible upon their articulation of that identity.

The implications of this rationalisation of human agency for this thesis are less clear, when one considers that a fundamental premise upon which the understanding of myth in this thesis is put forth, is that myth is primarily a sociological/cultural phenomenon. That being the case, differentiation between human agency on an individual basis, and collective issues of human agency is required.

Barthes links myth clearly with class, politics and ideology, but conversely declares that myth is 'depoliticized speech' (1972, p.142). The thinking in this is useful in coming to grips with his understanding of the individual in creating and perpetuating myth. He suggests that myth 'has the task of giving us an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal' (1972 p.142), a process he attributes to bourgeois ideology. However, the nature of myth means that it is only properly constituted once the things in it actually lose the memory of how it was constituted. While the political nature of myth continues to be understood, the ideological inclination of the myth becomes harder to decipher, thus making it even more difficult to uncover the role of individuals or a collective. With the exception of the mythologist, Barthes suggests that readers of myth consume them innocently, 'not as a semiological system but as an inductive process: the signifier and the signified have, in his eyes, a natural relationship (1972 p.131)'. In doing this he seems to absolve the individual and indeed the collective in many respects from blame with regard to

both the creation and perpetuation of myth. Moriarty (1991, p.28) supports this view of human agency in Barthes in noting that myth obscures the role of human beings in producing the structures they inhabit. This has the obvious impact of inhibiting mans' capacity to change those structures. Flood also concurs, and suggests that Barthes fails to make it clear whether this conveyance of illusion by bourgeoisie is a conscious or unconscious aim (2002a, p.164).

Foucault quite deliberately takes the issue of human agency out of the equation in describing the principles of archaeology:

(A)rchaology does not try to restore what has been thought, wished, aimed at, experienced, desired by men in the very moment at which they expressed it in discourse; it does not set out to recapture that elusive nucleus in which the author and the *œuvre* exchange identities ... . In other words, it does not try to repeat what has been said by repeating it in its very identity. ... It is not a return to the innermost secret of the origin; it is the systematic description of a discourse-object. (Foucault 1972, p.156)

Danaher et al (2000, p.31) note that Foucault generally rejects the idea of a self-governing subject, given that the thoughts and actions of an individual are clearly influenced and regulated by the discourses encountered in daily living.

Popkewitz & Brennan suggest that this 'decentring of the subject is a strategy not to reject humanism but to resituate that humanism by historicizing the conceptions of actors and reason through which practice and purpose are constructed' (1998, p11). In a manner almost analogous to Barthes' idea of reading myth, where humans have a distinct role to play in Foucault is in the creation of the archaeology of monuments and the re-examination of documents.

For Habermas, matters of human agency are much more central to his theoretical stance. As discussed in Chapter Two, in considering the idea of a theory of knowledge as social theory, Habermas explores in detail the relationship between knowledge and interest. In essence, it is claimed that knowledge only comes about by a process of self-emancipation through reflection, which in turn leads to perspective transformation. The idea of self-reflection is qualified by an important discussion on autonomy, where Habermas notes that ‘it is always illusory to suppose an autonomy, free of presuppositions, in which knowing first grasps reality theoretically, only to be taken subsequently into the service of interests alien to it’ (1972, p.313). However, he proceeds to further argue that the individual must always bear some responsibility for their knowledge, thus firmly establishing the idea that knowledge and interest are, in fact, one.

In this brief analysis of these three theoretical contributions, a significant point of contrast clearly emerges regarding myth and human agency (all the while acknowledging the previous discussion regarding the relationship between myth and knowledge). Habermas is only one of the three theorists who gives centrality to responsibility and self-reflection (which may be equated with self-evaluation) in knowledge; which are of course core concerns in Taylor’s understanding of human agency noted above. This should not be surprising considering Habermas’ overt emancipatory intent.

However, this perceived divergence does not, as one might expect, interrupt the structural integrity of the understanding of myth put forth here, but rather strengthens it. What is not at issue is that humans are collectively responsible for



the perpetuation of a particular system of beliefs in the form of knowledge; this is the case for Barthes, Foucault and Habermas. Instead, it is more fruitful to consider whether they consider individual beings responsible for their own knowledge. On the surface, it would seem not; but on looking a little deeper, it becomes clear that all three demand that individuals become accountable for their own truths, though at different levels. For Barthes, it is at an advanced level: that of the mythologist who cuts himself off from myth-consumers, and is then condemned to live in a theoretical society in order to ‘liberate the myth’ (1972, p.157). For Foucault, it is at a somewhat more mundane level: that of the person who engages in an archaeological analysis in order to re-constitute ideals of discourse. For Habermas, it is at the most basic level: that of the person who is required to engage in self-reflection in order to constitute knowledge.

The way in which these obvious differences of interpretation of human agency can be transcended is through their shared belief in the possibilities of dialectical hermeneutics, regardless of differing emphases. That is, the understanding of human agency to be used in constructing the concept of myth (particularly the process of demythologising myth) is premised upon the idea of people seeking to interpret their place in the field/community to which they belong through engagement with language.

This utilitarian theoretical attitude, and differentiation between various functions in myth, somewhat stretches the structuralist intent of the modernist ideals of dialectics and hermeneutics, but it is entirely in keeping with the more tolerant and post-structuralist ideals of this critical mythic *bricolage*:

As they explore these complex interpretative dimensions of empirical research, bricoleurs examine the tradition of dialectics. Emerging in the ancient Greek scholarship of the sophists and the rhetoricians, dialectics has always harboured a suspicion of monological forms of both philosophy and knowledge production. In its simplest articulation dialectics wants to substitute monologue with dialogue. Such an act, dialecticians maintain, emancipates us from the power-drive assertions of the political, religious, social, cultural, educational, and scientific elite who believe their expertise moves them to a new stratum of authority. ... (K)nowledge in this tradition is viewed as dialectical, not propositional. This implies that there is more than one answer in the production and analysis of data about a phenomenon. ... Dialectics lend the word, 'tentative' to the bricolage – the knowledge produced by bricoleurs is tentative rather than final. ... Diversity and complexity are the watchwords of the bricolage, and difference always plays a central role in the process of knowledge production. (Kincheloe & Berry 2004, pp.93-94)

To further this, it is helpful to look to Bourdieu, particularly his ideas of symbolic power and cultural capital as they relate to field, as well as habitus, all discussed in the previous chapter. With regard to field initially, the relationship is relatively straightforward. Individuals utilise their human agency in order to improve their position-taking in their field. Success in this regard has immediate rewards in a superior position, which brings with it more cultural capital and symbolic power. Harker *et al* find this limiting in terms of agency:

Bourdieu conceives of agency in such a way that everyone is an agent whether they like it or not. Agents occupy positions within fields which, as we have pointed out, effectively limit the range of actions or options. Neither the objective social structures (which limit the options) nor the disposition of agents (which make a choice between options or strategies) are independent entities – one is embedded in the other – a double structuration. (Harker *et al* 1990, p.203)

Habitus is a little more complex given that it relates directly to the individual as opposed to how the individual chooses to place themselves. Jenkins suggests that habitus is Bourdieu's mechanism for bridging the gap between a social life determined solely in terms of individual decision-making on one hand, or

determined by supra-individual 'structures' on the other (2002, p.74). Ultimately, however agency is always confined to the constraints of the habitus which embodies the history of the group or class to which the agent belongs.

With regard to community, agency has a broader remit. Individuals are constrained by ideals of communality and security, but have more leeway in terms of position and history. This confers greater freedom on members of the community of drama as education to engage with ideas of change. As long as those ideas are resonant with the sense of identity held by the individuals involved, there is a much greater possibility of their agency being translated into action and change being facilitated.

### **Deciphering, Reading, Demythologising and Remythologising**

The question regarding the manner in which myths should be read, deciphered or demythologised concerns all who write of myth. Clear distinctions need to be drawn between the various terms employed. Barthes' understanding of reading and deciphering myth has been covered in detail in Chapter Two. Essentially, he sees the reader of myth as an innocent consumer of a factual system, whereas the system is in reality a semiological one. One of the more striking ambiguities of Barthes' essay is that although he states the above, the essay is written not for the readers of myth but the mythologists. These are figures distanced from myth-consumers by their own choice. Barthes claims that the speech of mythologists is a metalanguage; their task remains ambiguous, they can live revolutionary action only vicariously, and are 'condemned to live in a theoretical sociality; for him, to be in society is, at best, to be truthful ... His connection with the world is of the

order of sarcasm' (1972, p.157). So, despite an insightful account of myth and an evocative description of the mythologist, Barthes offers little by way of insight into the process of demythologising.

It is, however, a process addressed at length by Segal:

Demythologized, myth ceases to be about the world and turns out to be about the human *experience* of the world. Demythologized, myth ceases to be an explanation at all and becomes an expression, an expression of what it 'feels' like to live in the world. Myth ceases to be merely primitive and becomes universal. It ceases to be false and becomes true. It depicts the human condition. (2004, p.48)

With this perspective, demythologised myth becomes compatible with science (2002, p.26), because it refers not to the world, but to the human experience of it.

This essentially opens myth to critical analyses of the manner in which ideological, political and linguistic factors are at play. Saper (1997), in his detailed analysis of Barthes' concept of myth, suggests that Barthes' understanding of *artificial mythologies*, is in fact more useful. Essentially, some of the habitual myths become well worn and transparent, and the reader sees through them, only to be immediately confronted with another myth, this one remaining intact. *Artificial mythologies* become widespread once the original myth has become entirely visible, but is allowed to remain in place artificially as a cultural invention, a means of allowing humanity to recognise and enjoy myth, regardless of the fact they are still constantly surrounded by myths not obvious to them. Whilst *artificial myths* are not of particular importance here, insight can be gleaned from the process of demythologising described, which is voluntarily (as in the case of *artificial mythologies*) or involuntarily followed by a process of remythologising. This is not to say that the same myth is re-formed, but to

emphasise that any deciphering of a myth will always be followed by the putting in place of a new myth.

Thus, the manner in which myths are deciphered through the usage of the critical mythic *bricolage* can be understood as portrayed in *Figure 4.4*. The upper tier of the diagram refers to the ‘natural’ mythologising that takes place when power, ideology and language are brought together through human agency to create the various categories of mythic activity. The lower tier refers to the process of demythologising, which only begins once myths are treated as discourse and subject to critical scrutiny, in this instance though the mechanism of *bricolage*. That process (again facilitated by human agency) inevitably leads, as described above, to further myths being formed, but also to a range of understandings regarding ideology, power/politics and language.

It is also worth noting that myths operate within structures (in the case of this work, educational and cultural institutions), thereby differentiating them from Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. Myths respond and morph as a result of political, ideological and linguistic forces and the manner in which they operate within structures reflects this. Habitus, which describes the structure, acts in the opposite direction, as it directly shapes those forces.

In a nutshell, this project aspires to demythologising (and remythologising) myth in order to supplement the discourse of the fields of education and drama/theatre, and more importantly, the community of drama as education. This process is not for the sake of analysis in itself, nor is it to seek empirical or epistemological

change. It is in keeping with the dual Habermasian ideals of communicative action leading to perspective transformation (action), and also to seek the establishment of a normative universalism in drama as education with the provision of ideal-speech situations. Only these are aspired to. Agency on the part of individuals within the community/field will decide whether change is to be effected. As a result of demythologising, the myths as delineated are no longer mythic in nature. Once recognised, they are seen as constructed cultural entities (driven by ideological, political and linguistic forces), and are not any longer simply a 'natural' part of the operation of the cultural or educational institution in question. The effects of these myths, may however, remain in place, unless action is taken. A clear end-result, however, is that through the process of remythologising, other myths will come into being as a result of the new understandings of manner in which language, power and ideology operate and intersect.

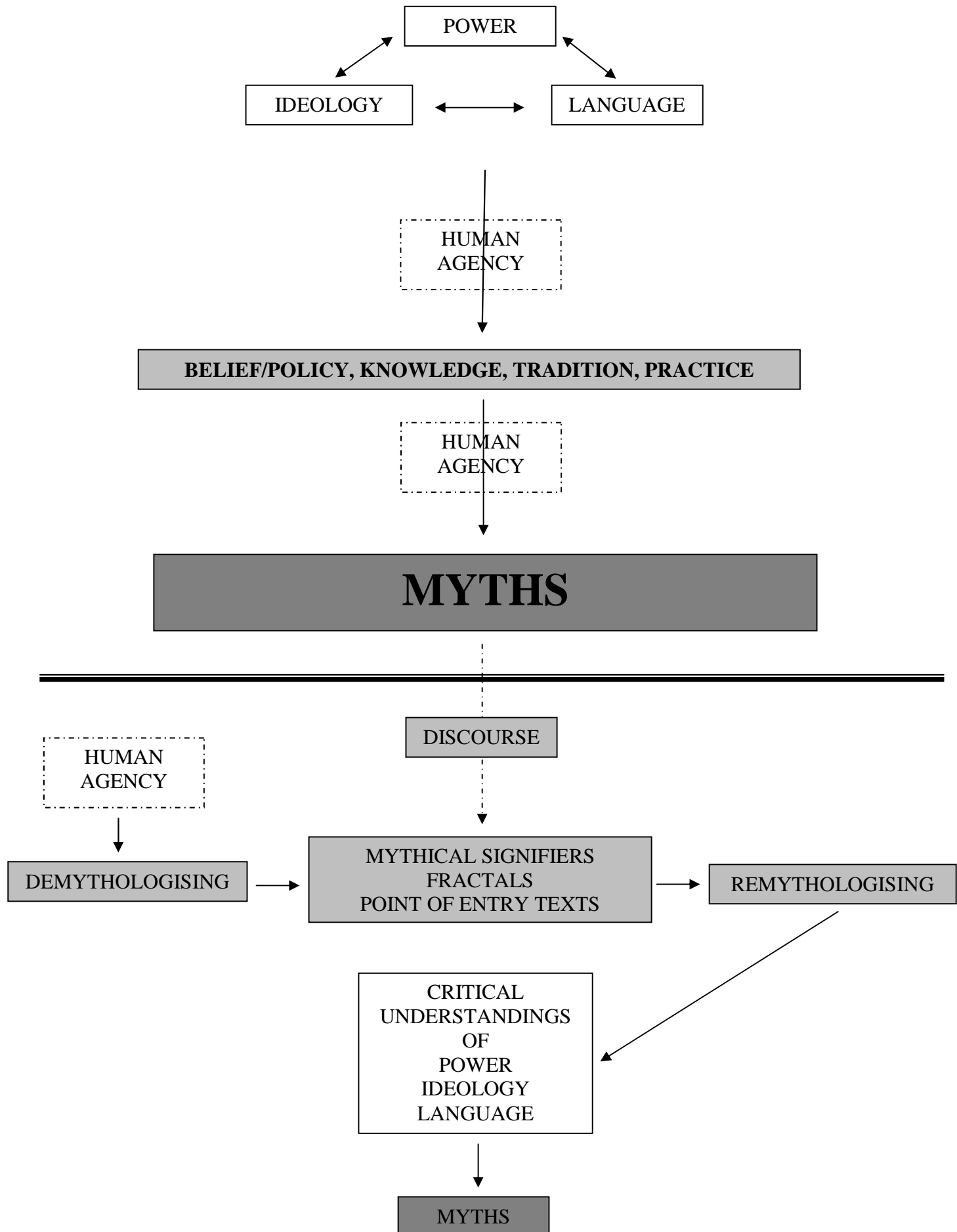


Figure 4.4 – Demythologising and Remythologising

### **Demythologising in Action in Drama as Education: David Hornbrook**

Before proceeding to apply the *bricolage* to contemporary discourse in Irish drama as education, it is worth spending some time deepening the context of the community within which it is to be applied, and it is also informative to explore attempts made at demythologising in the past. Brief mention was made in Chapter One regarding the fact that a critical tradition in drama as education is only now slowly evolving, and an effort made to chart some of the important contributions toward that end over recent years. Chapter Three sought to give an account of the unique nature of the community of drama as education, while this chapter has seen a brief account of how rhetoric is a prominent part of its genesis and ongoing operation.

The most significant outsider and dissenting figure in drama as education over the last three decades has been David Hornbrook. He has commented widely on all aspects of drama as education, particularly focussing on the drama in education (DiE) tradition. Along with Allen (1979), Ross (1985, 1989), Abbs (1987, 1989a, 1989b, 1994) and Havell (1987) he contributed strongly-formed opinions regarding drama, much of it claiming to demythologise aspects of the practice he encountered. The very rapid growth of the forms and transformative pedagogy<sup>xiv</sup> of drama in education within the broader community of drama as education, seems in hindsight to have left everyone struggling to keep abreast of the latest developments, never mind critiquing them. Bolton (1998) charts the range of experimentation that took place in drama classrooms from the turn of

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<sup>xiv</sup> This term was coined in the magazine 2D to define Dorothy Heathcote's work. Cited in Anderson 2002, p.33.



the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century although little was documented or commented upon prior to the 1950's.

In tracing Hornbrook's efforts at demythologising drama in education, one must look to the article that arguably started the debate. Clegg wrote in 1973 of his concern that drama in education could have grown at such a pace 'without anyone really getting to grips with what it is all about' (1973, p.31). He spoke of issues such as the ideological conflicts in education and theatre, the myth of 'personal development' and tracts from the 'High Priests'<sup>xv</sup>, and was quite scathing in his evaluation of the claims of the early DiE practitioners:

No, it just won't do. This notion that the sudden inclusion of drama in all schools and colleges will lead to the production of happy, contented children – to the good life – is altogether too simplistic. And so it is – put like that. No one in their right minds would suggest it, but much that is suggested isn't far from it when you come to analyze it. (Clegg 1973, p.38)

The importance of Clegg's contribution is not so much in its analysis – though it succeeds in identifying some of the issues that would remain in play for many years to come – but in the nature of the criticism, and in its suggestion of an unquestioned mythology in the DiE tradition. The following issue of *Theatre Quarterly* (1973, 8:10) contained a plethora of responses to Clegg, the majority strongly expressing their opposition to his position. And so the scene was set for two decades of sometimes openly vitriolic debate as to the nature of drama as education.

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<sup>xv</sup> A derogatory term used to describe Heathcote and Bolton.

Hornbrook entered this debate with a series of articles in *2D: Dance/Drama* (1983, 1984, 1987) and *New Theatre Quarterly* (1985, 1986). In the earliest of these, he returns to Clegg's assertion of the existence of a collective mythology, which he defines as 'a set of simple assertions which a teacher challenged at his or her own peril' (1983, p.14). Hornbrook suggests that the keystone of Clegg's attempts at demythologising lay in the unassailability of Slade's understanding as to the natural nature of children's drama. This idea of attacking the romantic/progressive tradition in writing on drama remains central to Hornbrook's work, including his books (1989, 1991, 1998a, 1998b). However, in that initial article, Hornbrook clearly politicises the mythology of drama as education, and discusses the dangers he perceives in allowing a methodological approach to take root, which is at variance with what he perceives to be the ideological values of British society:

That we should be complacent in today's ideological climate where the dominant values, like it or not, have plainly more to do with 'discipline', 'competition', 'respect for authority', and where the Union Jack is no longer a joke emblazoning shopping bags, is not only an abdication of any moral or political responsibility for the content of our teaching, but a profound betrayal of the principles upon which drama has always put such store – 'tolerance', 'understanding', 'compassion', and 'respect for persons'. (Hornbrook 1983, p.16)

Hornbrook suggests that the problem with the (then) dominant and emergent educational ideologies is that it is possible for activities such as DiE to gain credence without much justification, and they then become insulated within the value structure propounded by the prevailing ideological current. He sees the idea of 'universal truths' as practised by some in drama, as running contrary to the values of society, and this presents a profound moral and political dilemma to practitioners of drama in education; how can the parameters of drama in

education be successfully redefined in order that it can itself re-conceptualise its place within a system of state education?

Another problematic at the heart of Hornbrook's early articles is the danger of placing content at the centre of learning drama, in that it is not only the explicit message being transmitted, but also the 'implicit message and values which permeate the drama process' (1984, p.50). He suggests that what is lost in the constant debate as to the efficacy of artistic methods, (hidden, he claims, in the self-referential fallacy of its own language which conceals its inherent didacticism) is the realisation that in working in this particular way commits the practitioner to 'a particular set of moral and political principles' (1984, p.53). Hornbrook's issue is that he patently feels that drama is reluctant to face the truth, and that it perpetuates a set of pedagogic values that are not consistent with the society within which the educational system exists.

These arguments are broadened and deepened in his articles in *New Theatre Quarterly* (1985, 1986). Hornbrook also critically tackles issues such as the manner in which drama is examined, the place of drama and role-play in the curriculum as a whole (essentially critiquing the nature of learning through the dramatic medium as opposed to simply in drama), and ideas of sincerity and authenticity in drama teaching. He also analyses the work of Heathcote, referring to her as a 'Shaman in Role' and 'high priestess', and effectively dismissing her praxis by noting that in her writings, 'her mystifying vocabulary tends only to redescribe and obscure what are largely intuitive, non-theoretical processes' (1985, p.357). This quite personalised and cutting scrutiny of the work of an

individual is continued in a 1987 article, provocatively titled ‘No More Gurus: The Arts and Educational Drama’. It can be posited that this level of criticism militated strongly against the efficacy of Hornbrook’s critiques of the DiE tradition in particular, as well as the wider community of drama as education.

This approach clearly represents mis-placed politics on Hornbrook’s part. In a more defined discrete field, such as drama/theatre, Hornbrook’s attack would simply have been part of discrediting Heathcote’s work in order to improve his own position in the field, and thus by doing so, to attain for himself more cultural capital and symbolic power. His rhetoric would have been recognised as such, and given the nature of fields, his contributions would have been seen as part of the normal cut-and-thrust of position-taking. Instead, in the community of drama as education, struggling for security and identity, Hornbrook’s work was simply seen as a vicious personalised attack.

Returning to the 1986 article, Hornbrook there devotes a substantial piece of analysis to the idea of subjectivity as he finds it in the romantic ideals of DiE, and places it in comparison with the tradition of English literary criticism. His interpretation is pertinent to this work, in that it draws deeply on understandings of ideology and culture and links to the later discussion in the thesis of the fallacy of naturalism and representation. Suggesting that the ontological foundations of DiE in essence link the autonomous self to a universality of feeling, Hornbrook insists that the resultant subjective response is not treated as simply such, but is instead elevated ‘to the status of a moral revelation’ (1986, p.20). The difficulty with this is that assumptions are not perceived as being

ideologically laden, but instead ‘as self-evident and unproblematic truths about the human condition, transcending cultural and historical boundaries’ (*ibid.*). The practical difficulty with this stance, from Hornbrooks’s perspective, is made immediately clear:

Teachers who rail against the evils of indoctrination and propaganda fail to see how, by investing cultural meaning with the status of transcendent truth, and suggesting that what they reveal in drama is somehow *beyond* ideology, they are unconsciously but effectively reinforcing a dominant value system, and assuring the continuing hegemony of those whose interests it serves. In an inevitably mild-mannered way, drama teachers have written for themselves an aesthetic of quietism. (Hornbrook 1986, p.21)

The reactions to these articles were numerous, with many well-known contributors in the community perceptibly angry at Hornbrook’s arguably failed attempts to move the debate to a critical level. Bolton, for example finds that the only clear message to be taken from Hornbrook’s writing is ‘that teachers should return to the training of their pupils in theatre skills and textual study’ (Bolton 1986, p.369). Another respondent dismisses his critique as ‘anecdotal’ and suggests that Hornbrook fails ‘to ground his theory in specific classroom examples’ (Nixon 1986, p.285). The most substantial response to actually critically engage with Hornbrook’s writings at the time clearly acknowledges the validity of much of the criticism, but fundamentally disagrees with it (O’Toole 1987). As will be explored in the next chapters, many aspects of this early criticism still remain fundamentally unanswered.

Much of Hornbrook’s earlier work is distilled into his most substantial critical commentary (1989, 1998a), and the themes established in the earlier work are clearly followed through and developed. Clear changes are notable between both

editions, understandable given the lapse of nearly a decade and the developments that took place in that time – unless otherwise stated, the second edition is the one referred to here. Without ever shying away from his provocative and personalised rhetorical style<sup>xvi</sup>, Hornbrook delivers in the first section an account of the development of the DiE tradition. In the second there follows a detailed analysis of the fundamental theoretical flaws he finds with the manner in which drama as education is currently understood, and finally the third section presents a way forward for drama education, something that is expanded upon and developed in another volume (Hornbrook 1991). Given that the focus of this project centres around developing an understanding of myth in action, section two is of most interest here – it represents a clear attempt at demythologising aspects of drama as education. The following paragraphs are a summary of the arguments presented, and an analysis of the effectiveness of Hornbrook's endeavours to reveal what he understands as the four fundamental areas of myth implicit in DiE practice.

### **A) Philosophical & Psychological Myths**

The first of these deals with the influence of the impact of nineteenth-century Romanticism. Hornbrook argues that the 'privatisation' of artistic endeavour as a result of the writings of Rousseau, and subsequently Witkin amongst others, resulted in a situation whereby ideals of individual experience and uniqueness in art are of paramount importance, resulting in what he terms 'the omnipotent self'. In education this had the effect of prioritising creativity and self-expression to the detriment of artistic achievement and value. The added force of what he calls the

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<sup>xvi</sup> The first four chapters in the earlier edition (1989) are entitled: (1) 'The Plot: The Rise of Drama-in-Education', (2) 'The Players: Dorothy, Gavin and the New Mugglestonians', (3) 'The Setting: Events on the Public Stage', (4) 'Dramatic Tension: Barricades and Bewilderment'.

‘psychological imperative’ (1998, p.63) granted justification in society for self-authentication in art as well as life in general – nothing is wrong if sincerely expressed. To this psycho-philosophical pot Hornbrook adds phenomenological understandings from Husserl to effectively explain the origins (and therefore the implicit fallacy) of ‘universals’ as widely utilised in the DiE practice of Heathcote, and the writings of Bolton. He suggests that all of the above can be seen as ‘complementary responses to twentieth century secularism which seek to mystify the self and to create a morality of introspection’ (1998, p.68), with the ultimate result of dissolving other social, cultural and political factors. The impact of the combination of these factors on the DiE tradition is unequivocal:

...(T)his is the vacuum at the centre of drama-in-education, the existential, narcissistic wilderness around which students circle in search of truth, value and meaning, but in which all the so-called social learning of the drama class, however conscientiously engineered, must in the end be condemned to wander aimlessly. In its desolate landscape the only deontological imperative is the absolute relativity of moral values; your actions need no other criterion to command my respect than that you should sincerely believe they are right for you. (Hornbrook 1998, p. 68)

### **B) Myths of Form & Aesthetic**

The second area of myth delineated by Hornbrook concerns the nature of the art of drama as education, specifically the pseudo dichotomy that had come about in terms of understandings of ‘drama’ and ‘theatre’. He sees many of the problems as rooted in the movements noted above, which allowed (or forced) drama educators in the DiE tradition to move away from the tradition of English, thus causing a detachment from the home and history of drama. The obvious result of this break is that DiE has no canon of accredited literature against which the ‘rightness’ of the aesthetic achievement can be gauged. When the making of art and aesthetic achievement is entirely caught up in ideals of personal

development, and introspection with the intention of discovering universal ideals, as claimed by Hornbrook, the problem as he sees it is that there is no fall-back. Essentially, his claim is that without the tradition of English as an objective reference point, these ideals are allowed to continue unrestrained. Added to this is the somewhat ironic links that Hornbrook claims the DiE tradition has with naturalism in theatre: ironic in that he finds that many of the methodological forms utilised by practitioners have more in common with the expressionism movement, and few real similarities with the *Lehrstück* and agitprop movements to which they overtly aspire. The links with naturalism are evident in ‘the passive, internalised objectives of educational drama’, as well as ‘inner-standings’, ‘awarenesses’ and ‘making of meanings’ (1998, p.78), all of which he finds to be products of both traditional humanism and naturalistic conventions. The ultimate result is that the DiE tradition has, what he terms, a transcendental and uncritical view of the aesthetic that places itself beyond criticism.

### **C) Myths of Knowledge and Learning**

Hornbrook’s third substantive area of critique in the DiE tradition concerns the educational claims for the tradition, and the more fundamental idea of ‘knowing’ in drama. Returning once again to the remnants of the Romantic project, he looks at the subjective/objective knowledge dichotomy, and notes that DiE (especially Bolton) has oft-times made claims with regard to bridging this particular gap between the objective outside world and the subjective inner world (1998, p.82). Referring to the work of Polanyi and Hargreaves, Hornbrook essentially dismisses this claim, suggesting that although a theory of personal knowledge has some credence in terms of people knowing themselves, it eventually fails



because that knowledge can never be classified in terms of the manner in which ‘the knower’ has gained his/her knowledge of the world. Hornbrook takes issue with the idea that ‘moments of significance’, a key aspect of the DiE tradition, are the kernel of learning in the drama classroom. His problem is grounded in the fact that these moments are indistinguishable from the dominant figures (i.e. teachers) who create the moments, and whose ideological stance (as well as many other aspects of their practice) clearly shapes the moment, whilst at the same time proclaiming a neutrality of stance with regard to the work:

Thus, in the drama-in-education session as much as in the theatre, we may be changed – or remain unchanged – by an immense number of contributing experiences. ... In school, students’ attitudes to their teachers will hugely affect what those teachers’ classes ‘mean’, no less in drama than in any other area of the curriculum. And with the teacher such a conspicuous part of the process, there is no lack of opportunity for some teachers to hijack the drama for their own glorification ... (Hornbrook 1998, pp. 86-87)

Hornbrook’s examination of the nature of learning in drama provokes more questions than provides answers. He muses as to whose values (in DiE) should be proclaimed as universal values, and indeed what quality of experience deems it a profound or meaningful one. His own stance is unequivocal, however, in that he suggests that until such time as it is recognised that drama is constituted of a body of knowledge, a theory of knowledge in drama will not be easy.

#### **D) Myths of Culture and Power**

The final matter of concern to Hornbrook is perhaps the most substantive. By bringing cultural theory into play, he subjects the DiE tradition to analysis that attempts to illuminate the relationship between society and education, in particular drama as education. The first link Hornbrook chooses to follow is the

manner in which the word 'need' is bandied about in contemporary education (1998, p.92), with the result that in DiE practice, it is often linked with ideas of emancipation and empowerment. He suggests that the opposite is, in fact, true, and that despite the many references to the work of Boal, amongst others, drama of this kind is often exclusionary and disempowering. The idea that through drama, participants can really feel what it is like to be in another's situation is the next aspect of the same problem tackled. For Hornbrook, referring to the writings in social anthropology of Geertz, the manner in which ideas of cultural difference are treated in the traditional DiE setting tends to be reductionist, drawing on the 'self-evident truths of liberal individualism' (1998, p.96). The inability of current practice to move beyond ideas of 'universal human-ness' and 'noble savagery', and to imagine an infinitely more complex and profoundly more political world is problematic for him. Finally, Hornbrook looks to issues of knowledge, particularly the question as to whose knowledge is to be dealt with in the classroom. This line of argument emanates from a concern that drama's insistence in putting forth a 'common-sense curriculum', that seeks to respond to the needs of the majority of young people, in fact denies children the opportunity to experience culture in its 'widest possible context' and therefore denies them the opportunity to experience knowledge by which they can change themselves (1998, p.98). In arguing for a wider understanding of culture, Hornbrook adopts an unashamedly revisionist stance:

This reluctance to admit the wider culture as a frame of critical reference has led some in the direction of a rejection of traditional forms altogether. While it could be argued that this represents a recognition of the class-based, male-orientated domination of certain well-defined cultural forms, mounting a challenge to them will require active engagement with the values of that hegemony and its vehicles rather than a simple denial of the iconography. Furthermore, it is not clear that the art of the past and its present-day derivatives, however superficially 'elitist' can simply be

dismissed on ideological grounds. To do so assumes the existence and recognition of an emergent alternative which is able in superior ways to engage with our sense of presence. (Hornbrook 1998, p.98)

In assessing Hornbrook's attempt at demythologising, the first task at hand is to evaluate the efficacy of his critical analysis of the community of drama as education, with particular reference to the *bricolage* proposed here. There is little doubt that Hornbrook's analysis is an attempt at deciphering or demythologising myth as that process was defined earlier. The arguments synopsised above recognise the importance of ideology and language (and to a lesser extent power/politics) in the development of practice, tradition, knowledge and policies in drama as education. Recognition is also given to the centrality of human agency in this process. In fact, Hornbrook suggests that the progressors of myth (referred to throughout as 'witnesses'), have a much more pronounced role in the creation of myth than will be asserted in this thesis. Where the models of analysis differ radically are in terms of human agency on the part of the researcher: i.e. the intent of the work, the fundamental understanding of myth utilised, and the (lack of) recognition of the process of remythologising. It is clear from the outset of Hornbrook's writing that his intent in following this particular trajectory of analysis is not about perspective transformation in the Habermasian sense but empirical, epistemological change: i.e. to right perceived wrongs and omissions:

In looking at some of the paradoxes of drama-in-education I shall try to make sense of them against the background of this wider and fast-changing historical scene. ... My modest aims is to offer drama teachers ways of recognising, legitimating and developing what is best in their practice, in all its rich variety, so that curricular objectives may be articulated with more confidence and clarity. (Hornbrook 1989, p xi)

As noted in passing earlier, Hornbrook's perspective shows a distinct lack of understanding of the nature of the community of drama as education. As a result,

Hornbrook became a vitriolic by-word within the field and community for divisiveness, and for all those who choose not to support the project of drama in education. Whilst this was undeserved, it was not remarkable given the rhetorical position-taking he willingly partook in. This is a clear example of human agency at play in demythologising. Unfortunately for Hornbrook, it diminished the efficacy of his critique, and lessened its potential audience, and his thesis became reduced to a linear anti drama in education, and pro performance in schools stance. This was, in hindsight, a loss to the development of drama as education, as many of his critiques still hold water under the research lens proposed here. In effect, what transpired is that in an attempt to demythologise, Hornbrook simply remythologised but in a particularly ineffective way – his writings became part of the contemporary epistemological myths of drama, but not part of the operational myths.

Aside from the rhetorical language and badly played politics, the transformative intent of Hornbrook's writings played a substantial role in this outcome. Working in the critical tradition clearly demands an emancipatory intent, but the manner in which emancipation is understood in this work is as an ongoing process of action, which may or may not result in changes in the short-term, but seeks to put in place a critical awareness. As will be seen, it will be posited that curricular/educational change should only occur as a result of critical examination, and critical examination should not only be instigated as a result of a pre-meditated desire for change, but should be a central and permanent facet of good educational praxis.

Differences exist too in terms of the concept of myth employed. Hornbrook's work supposes myth as a malignant force, intimately linked with mystification and obfuscation, and therefore to be expunged as quickly as possible. This understanding is mirrored throughout his writings in frequent discussions regarding the objective/subjective knowledge dichotomy and the epistemological arguments for a canon of drama as education. In essence, it can be argued that Hornbrook understands curriculum as a series of choices, some of which are clearly right and some clearly wrong. In opposition to that stance, it is argued here that curriculum is always a reflection of the 'structure of feeling' (Williams 1961) of a society at any given time. It is never wrong, but simple a representation of choices, (albeit a political and ideological set of choices) made at a particular point, and always therefore open to interpretation and critique. Myth is understood here in a benign manner, and whilst constantly requiring demythologising, is usually necessary to the smooth and ongoing operation of a given system.

Hornbrook also equates myths with structures in his analysis. He sees drama in education not as a set of conventions and practices, but as an entity which is in opposition to the canonical perspective he holds to have more value. This in essence serves to set up quite a confrontational right/wrong dialectic between the DiE practices and more traditional understandings of the teaching of drama, and it is a potential reason as to why Hornbrook's analysis was arguably rejected by the majority of practitioners. It is also at odds with the analytical perspective being adapted in this work. Interestingly, and as an aside, at no point does Hornbrook question the place or centrality of drama to what he considers to be an

enlightened concept of education – this represents a process of mythologising in itself.

Hornbrook makes no explicit reference to the fact that in demythologising, he is simultaneously entering into a process of remythologising. This stance is consistent with the ultimate end-point of Hornbrook's work, which is to propose an alternative model (inevitably a 'correct' model) of curricular development for drama as education, without recourse to the analysis of individual agents involved in the creation of myth. The difference of emphasis is quite obvious, with this project focussing on the development of a theoretical model that illuminates the fundamental relationships that exist between ideology, language and power/politics in the creation and perpetuation of myths. This is done with a view to communicating these beliefs, and facilitating human agents to engage with perspective transformation and to act on that, if so desired.

Ironically perhaps, the intent here, as is clearly the case with Hornbrook, is to place centre-stage the role of the agent/actor.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**GOVERNING MYTHS**

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Dramatic Education is an all-inclusive academic discipline. It uses as tools all branches of learning that bear upon the dramatic impulse. It utilises eclectically each and every single discipline into one unified body of knowledge so that it can help us comprehend the nature of experience. It brings together many aspects of hitherto unrelated studies: aspects of philosophy, for we must examine why we educate our children in this way; psychoanalysis, to understand the symbols the child uses, and the underlying motives, within the content of his play; sociology, for acting is a social activity implying the interaction of individuals; social psychology, because imitation, identification, role playing and the like are directly related to man acting within his environment; cognition and psycholinguistics, for the relationship of concept formation and language impinges directly upon the dramatic method of learning. And in approaching the theatre, aspects of mathematics, physics, engineering, aesthetics and other fields of study become grist to our mill.

If we commence our thinking about education with the child as a child, developing and evolving within the life process, then all other studies become the tools by which we apprehend existence. It is in this context that we approach those fields that most immediately bear upon Dramatic Education. (Courtney 1974, p.59)

### **Identifying a Point of Entry Text (PoET)**

The supposition made throughout this work that myths exist in drama as education must at this point be given some sense of concrete identity. A practical understanding also needs to be developed regarding the manner in which they operate and the sphere of influence they knowingly or unwittingly perpetuate. This discussion will take place within the four categories delineated in the last chapter, *Governing Myths*, *Traditional Myths*, *Epistemological (Theatrical) Myths* and *Operational Myths*. The starting point for this discussion will be the Point of Entry Text (PoET) – its relevance for *bricolage* and the particular methodological variant being employed in this work having been discussed in Chapter Four also. What should be re-emphasised at this juncture is that the PoET being utilised (the 1999 primary drama curriculum of the Republic of



Ireland) is not being subjected to document analysis in any traditional sense – it is being treated to a range of research-oriented lens that allow it to be complexified as a *bricolage*, thus allowing the researcher to problematise both itself and the world itself (Kincheloe & Berry 2004, p.115).

As part of the process of ‘feedback looping’ essential to the layering of complexity in *bricolage*, (Kincheloe & Berry 2004, pp.128-129) some specific contextual information is important with regard to the 1999 revised primary curriculum, and the current climate of Irish primary education and educational research, which is the context within which this work is being produced. This is in addition to the more macro-level discussion on the site of the research in that took place in Chapter Three.

The relationship between language, discourse and society (as well as being intertwined and deeply rooted) is of the utmost importance to this project. This is particularly the case in this chapter, where in essence the claim is being made that a set of documents are representative of the discourse of a particular cultural domain. For Barthes, Foucault and Habermas, texts and documents are variously understood as, respectively; ‘mythical speech’ regardless of its material (Barthes 1972, p.110); objects that are transformed by history into monuments (Foucault 1972, pp. 7-8); and forms of discourse and speech that must be recognized as communicative actions and therefore a form of rationality (Rasmussen 1990, p.28).

This variety of understandings now needs to be refined somewhat in order that this variety of meanings can be collectively or perhaps collaboratively brought to bear in the analysis of a specific document or text. Fairclough, citing Halliday's understanding of *text* as both a written text and 'spoken texts' warns of the dangers in such a potentially reductive approach:

A text is a product rather than a process – a product of the process of text production. But I shall use the term *discourse* to refer to the whole process of social interaction of which a text is just a part. This process includes in addition to the text the *process of production*, for which the text is a resource. Text analysis is correspondingly only a part of discourse analysis, which also includes analysis of productive and interpretative perspectives. The formal properties of a text can be regarded from the perspective of discourse analysis on the one hand as *traces* of the production process, and on the other hand as *cues* in the process of interpretation. (Fairclough 2001, p. 20)

Fairclough's model of discourse analysis understands it as a tripartite system whereby the text, interaction (including the process of production and the process of interpretation), and context (the social conditions in place for both the process of production and the process of interpretation) are of equal importance. Resultant from such analysis is insight into the order of discourse, and from that, insights into the social order of the society in question. This, in turn, may give an understanding into dominant power and ideological structures and systems. The PoET under examination here, although a written text, gives access to the discourse of Irish drama as education. That, in turn, allows for analysis and critique of the interaction and context – these being of major importance given the macro-level orientation of this work.

For Williams (1961), and in dealing with the analysis of culture, texts (taking the same understanding noted above) represent elements of both the 'documentary'

culture and the 'recorded' culture. Neither can effectively capture the full essence of the 'structure of feeling' of a given epoch given that this is only ever accessible to those alive in the 'lived' culture. Analysis of the 'recorded' culture is always disrupted by the culture of the 'selective tradition', which means that, '(t)heoretically, a period is recorded; in practice this record is absorbed into a selective tradition; and both are different from the culture as lived' (Williams 1961, pp. 66-67). The importance of documents for him lies in the indication they offer as to what the current culture considers to be of importance, given that those in power in that culture have chosen this particular document as representative of the particular epoch from whence it emanated. In essence, documents from the 'recorded culture', by dint of their existence, offer a means of assessing the manner in which the 'culture of the selective tradition' is currently in operation. The importance of this cannot be understated, given that Williams understands the selective tradition as being, 'most difficult to accept and assess, [and] a rejection of considerable areas of what was once a living culture' (1961, p.68).

Such a multitude and variety of understandings are welcomed in dealing with a *bricolage* and are regarded as necessary in increasing the complexity of the construction through feedback looping:

In bricolage, where the PoET is subjected to multiple readings, conflicting discourses, fragments of an area, articulations of positionality, mixed genres of epistemology and methodologies, discursive ideologies and so forth, to describe feedback looping in detail is parallel to measuring the coastline of Newfoundland in centimetres. ... Feedback looping acts as a disruption of totalization of thought, words and deeds. Feedback looping does not mourn the loss of simple structures and processes. (Kincheloe & Berry 2004, pp.128-129)

In keeping with this requirement for constant revisiting and layering of meaning with regard to the satisfactory completion of feedback looping to increase complexity, there are two obvious ways of proceeding with an analysis of the PoET. The first would be to subject the PoET to a range of readings, with each lens of analysis subtly or radically altered to cater for a differently nuanced understanding of text, language or discourse, derived from readings of Habermas, Foucault *et al.* This would clearly be a cumbersome method of analysis, which although having the potential to reveal telling and worthwhile academic insight, would require a space far exceeding that available here to do so. The chosen *modus operandi* is more in keeping with the concept of *bricolage*, in that all of the multiple meanings of text, language and discourse will be taken as ‘givens’, and following a problematising process in these analysis chapters, the thesis will strive to create new meanings which it hopes are somewhat more informed, without claiming that they are in any ways more definitive. Through understanding the PoET in the variety of ways discussed throughout this dissertation – as myth, as monument, as communicative action, as text, as speech, as language, as discourse, as recorded culture and as selective tradition – a multitude of meaning will emerge. The aspiration is that these will add to the richness of the *bricolage* and clearly emphasise the location and functionally operative nature of the mythology of Irish drama as education.

### **The Curriculum as PoET**

The PoET being examined here is, (by its nature) a prescriptive government document. Whilst it may not be rigidly enforced or followed in schools, it regardless represents a potent means of understanding the intersection of language, ideology and power/politics at play in a contemporary educational system. The compelling nature of curricular documents as a starting point of analysis is well charted in literature. Winch and Gingell (2004) explore the nature of national (i.e. governing all schools) curricula, and note that any discussion in this regard automatically involves a combination of educational, moral and political ideals. The mere fact that a national curriculum has been imposed, particularly in a liberal democracy, implies a specific and dominant view as to the function and importance of an education system. Winch and Gingell present three fundamental critiques that they suggest should be asked of any national system. They are, that: (i) a national curriculum ‘demands a democratic debate concerning its scope and limits’; (ii) the nature of a national curriculum, by its nature must, ‘rule out other compelling visions of the curriculum.’; and (iii) the bureaucratic nature of national curricula prevents individual schools reacting to local conditions, ‘including some that are created by the attempt to create the curriculum in question’ (2004, pp. 27-28). Kelly’s detailed analysis of the many facets of curriculum clearly presents the idea of it ‘as the battleground of many competing influences and ideologies’ (2004, p.163), and notably foregrounds discourse as a means of ideological legitimisation. Kelly also differentiates between direct and indirect political influences on educational life, and charts the manner in which explicit governmental policy changes impact on education, as well as the subtler ideological influences emanating from the

dominant cultural grouping. This is a salient reminder not to look beyond the obvious and explicit influences in demythologising the Irish primary curriculum.

Discussing curriculum is not as straightforward as it might seem, with a substantial body of theory concerning curriculum design, evaluation and assessment in existence. Also, as Kelly (2004) notes, commenting on curriculum is an inherently societally-involved and publicly politicised operation, which is tied up in the current public fetishism regarding school effectiveness, teacher evaluation, performance management and ultimately the demand by the consumer of something akin to ‘value for money’ from the school system. This has a clear impact on educational research such as this, which although intrinsically critical and, of necessity probing and explorative, can be read as being simply damning.

With regard to the questions to be asked in this project, the PoET in question poses some specific difficulties. Firstly, the 1999 Irish primary curriculum can be seen as still relatively new, though now nearly a decade in existence. Whilst published in its entirety that year, the full curriculum has been rolled out subject-by-subject since that time. Drama was one of the last subjects to be formally introduced, with all teachers receiving in-service training and planning assistance in the school year 2006-2007. However, the relative newness of the PoET, combined with the smallness of the educational research community in the Republic of Ireland, means that comparatively little analysis or commentary of any sort has taken place since publication and implementation. A formal phase one review by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the

body responsible for the publication but not the implementation of the curriculum, was published in 2005, and focussed largely upon the subjects fully implemented, with some commentary on the general educational and organisational thrust of the revised programme (e.g. collaborative learning, role of parents, use of ICTs, assessment, etc). Some published scholarly critiques have focussed upon the analysis of particular aspects of the curriculum, for example early childhood education (Murphy 2004) and music education (O'Callaghan 2003). More lengthy contributions appear from Sugrue and Waldron in a book on Irish education edited by the former (2004). However, two substantial volumes on Irish education published in recent years, examining cultural politics and Irish education since the 1950's (O'Sullivan 2005), and curriculum in Ireland (Trant 2007), make no detailed reference to the introduction of the revised primary curriculum.

The lack of analysis is attributable to several factors; the small educational research community in Ireland, most of whom teach at university-level, which has seen an explosion of teaching activity in recent years, but has not yet witnessed a parallel boom in research activity; the relatively few state or non-governmental agencies with research-expertise involved in Irish education; and the recent emphasis (particularly for funded research) placed on more 'popular' and targeted aspects of education such as educational disadvantage, ICTs, science education. Anecdotal evidence would also seem to suggest there is a 'settling-in' factor with regard to the primary curriculum – there is a sense that perhaps the curriculum needs to be allowed to establish itself before being subject to rigorous review or analysis. The obvious inference to be taken from

that fact of omission is that primary education policy is seen to have little importance or impact on the overall educational vista in Ireland.

With the exception of an article by the author (Finneran 2000), no critical works or commentaries have emanated on the new Irish primary drama curriculum. Several new books relating to Irish drama as education have been published recently (Murphy & O’Keeffe 2006, Parkes & Fitzgibbon 2007, McCabe 2007), but all are methodologically orientated, their primary focus being the development of teaching skills and planning in drama. That being said, they do contain important perspectives that will be useful in the feedback looping process later.

This research project has the added difficulty that although the drama curriculum has been implemented in schools and some training provided for teachers, there is no data or analysis available on that process, or as to how that process will manifest itself in terms of the presence of drama in schools. However, this is not an obstacle to the work at hand – the PoET at its most basic operates as an access point to a range of extant mythologies. At its richest, it is a set of documents that can colour, flavour and contradict understandings developed elsewhere in the *bricolage*.

### **The 1999 Irish Primary Curriculum**

A brief historiographical account of drama as education in Ireland is necessary before proceeding to further analysis. This section will focus on describing the



short but important relationship between drama and the formal educational system in Ireland, particularly at primary level. The first national curriculum at primary level in Ireland was published in 1971. It tacitly recognised the importance of drama in certain areas of primary level of education without explicitly giving it a status of any sorts, certainly not to the extent that the early practitioners of drama in education (DiE) would have then been recognised as a force in the United Kingdom. The understanding of drama presented was centred around the possibilities drama might have for the efficient teaching of other subject-areas, especially languages, with drama being mentioned in the *Gaeilge* (Irish language) (Govt. of Ireland 1971a, pp. 32-33) and *English* sections (p.87 & p.105). Though explicit reference is not made to the growing influence of the type of developmental drama propounded in the work of Peter Slade (1954) and Brian Way (1967), it is clear from a reading that these are influential forces behind the references to drama in the curriculum – not least in the fact that Slade is referenced in the bibliography. The documents suggest that dramatic activity is important, ‘in that it enables the child to express externally his thoughts and feelings in different situations’, and has value ‘not only in the obvious function of entertainment, but also in the development of personality and intellect’ (1971a, p.87). It is noted that children in infant classes display a natural desire in free play and make-believe, and this can be exploited by the teacher, primarily through mime as an introduction to creative play-making. Other benefits noted include drama as a source of satisfaction, allowing children to become confident and self-reliant and helping their grace of movement and fluency and articulation of speech. In the more senior classes, with the development of ability in speech and writing, it is suggested that children may engage in the composition of their

own plays (1971a, p.105). This may lead to performance, but there is a clear if somewhat contradictory warning about the suitability and nature of performance:

Performance on stage is hardly desirable except, perhaps, in the last year at school, and the best results are obtained where the children present the “play” on the floor of their own classroom ... With staged presentations, however, the teacher will try to ensure that dull stereotyped acting is avoided, and that impressing the audience never becomes more important than portraying the character or event. (Govt. of Ireland 1971a, p.105)

The lack of a clear and fully explicated rationale for drama is not surprising however, given that drama merits mention on only four pages in a curriculum of over seven hundred. Interestingly, no mention of drama occurs alongside or within the sections concerning its ‘sister’ areas of music, or art and craft. It should be noted, however, that the understanding of drama presented, albeit briefly, is entirely consistent with a curriculum that is unashamedly child-centred in orientation where the ‘full and harmonious development of each child’ (1971a, p.13) is the primary aim.

A root-and-branch review of the Irish primary curriculum (NCCA 1990), and successive governmental green and white papers (Govt. of Ireland 1992, 1995) prompted a process of change and renewal in curriculum policy. This process eventually resulted in the publication of an entirely revised and extended primary curriculum in 1999. Claiming to encompass the philosophical thrust of the 1971 curriculum, it ‘incorporates current educational thinking and the most innovative and effective pedagogical practice’, and is designed to ‘cater for the needs of children in the modern world’ (Govt. of Ireland 1999c, pp.2-3). The curriculum

is differentiated into six sections: (i) **Language** (Gaeilge<sup>xvii</sup>, English); (ii) **Mathematics**; (iii) **Social, Environmental and Scientific Education** (History, Geography, Science); (iv) **Arts Education** (Visual Arts, Music, Drama); (v) **Physical Education**; (vi) **Social, Personal and Health Education**.

A rationale for the promotion of drama to full subject status within the curricular structure, and particularly within the arts education stable, is not given - the first mention of drama being that, '(e)ducational drama is a creative process that provides children with a wide range of valuable learning experiences' (Govt. of Ireland 1999c, p.54). Its presence as a full status subject area is significant however, given that the recognition of drama as a subject alongside music and visual arts is by no means a given in international education at either primary or secondary level. Some understanding of the process of emergence of drama to full subject level can be gleaned by examining the writings and happenings of the previous decades, cumulatively advocating the importance of drama as education, particularly the drama in education (DiE) variant. The substance of some of the arguments made will be returned to presently in this chapter, but for the moment, a chronology of events will suffice. A report on the arts in education published by the Arts Council (Benson 1979) provided the initial impetus and recognition in Ireland for drama as a serious educational concern. It noted that '(d)rama, both as a method and as a valuable activity in its own right, has not received the support it deserves', and that '(r)ecent advances in the use of drama show it to be a most effective and exciting way of teaching young children because it draws on the experience of the child' (1979, p.34). With the continued

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<sup>xvii</sup> Gaeilge (or Irish Gaelic) is nominally the first language in the Rep. of Ireland. In reality, English is the working language and spoken by the vast majority of the population.

expansion in interest and expertise in drama as education in the United Kingdom, a similar but smaller awakening towards the possibilities of drama as education was taking place in Ireland. Martin Drury, a prominent figure in Irish theatre and Art Council circles, and a significant voice over the years, notes the attitudinal changes towards the arts in education at that time:

In Ireland for the past five years ... there has been a movement towards a different kind of conviction, a conviction born out of a cooler understanding of what the arts are, what the particular contribution of the arts to education might be, and how it is that the Irish education system, with its by now infamous neglect of artistic and aesthetic education, is failing to address certain fundamental aims and objectives. (Drury 1985, p.25)

Building on the growing sense of conviction mentioned by Drury, three national conferences on drama in education were organised in Thomond College of Education, Limerick from 1987-1989. These brought some of the prominent international figures in the community such as Gavin Bolton, Cecily O'Neill and David Booth to work with Irish practitioners, with a view to aiding and developing the level of general awareness of drama (particularly drama in education) in Ireland and to support ongoing process of advocacy for drama in schools. In the proceedings of the first of these, the conference organiser, Hugh O'Donnell chronicles the individuals and organisations that have brought drama as education to the point it was then at in Ireland, notes that there is a bright future ahead and suggests some of the challenge for that future (O'Donnell 1988). Drury, in the proceedings of the following year, develops this theme, and clearly maps out the task at hand:

The strength of drama as a holistic pursuit is its weakness politically. The fact that it is not subject-centred in the conventional sense means that it lacks the professional coherence and institutional stability of other subjects. There is a multiplicity of traditions underpinning drama-in-education but this very richness is deeply problematic. (Drury 1988, p.16)

He suggests that in making the argument for drama in Irish schools, many 'reservoirs of tradition' can be drawn upon, but that this in itself is not altogether helpful, given the 'ideological hostility' that exists towards the arts in Irish schools (1988, p.18). The fluidity that so many drama educators strive for, he feels, 'is deeply problematic for a schooling system that trades in fixed imperatives' (1988, p.20). This comment is interesting, particularly given that the subsequent review of the existing primary curriculum notes that drama merits some increased attention in any new curriculum, but stops far short of actually advocating full subject status, instead suggesting that drama become 'a pedagogic resource and focus for integrating various aspects of the curriculum' (NCCA 1990, p.69).

The next substantive movement of advocacy for drama was a series of conferences organised by the National Association for Youth Drama (NAYD), beginning in 1993 and cumulating in a major international conference in Cork in 1998. At the first of these a primary Principal Teacher and drama activist, John McArdle reported a grim situation regarding the level and status of drama in Irish schools:

I've worked at educational drama for thirty years. The amount of drama done in our schools has hardly changed in that time. There is almost no drama done in any of the primary schools in my area and just as little in any of the secondary schools. Is it very different anywhere else?  
(McArdle, J. 1993, p.26)

The proceedings of the 1995 conference (McArdle, K. 1995) demonstrate clearly how the general desire for drama in Irish schools expressed in earlier years, had now become a clearly structured and articulate debate as to the form that it

should take. This momentum is manifest, as included as an appendix to the proceedings, is a statement from the NCCA advising that a ‘drama sub-committee’ was to be established to advise on the development of drama throughout the primary and secondary curricula. The forward-looking mood of the time is captured in O’Neill’s contribution:

To design this new drama curriculum will not be a straightforward task. It cannot be a purely idealistic document, but must take into account the actual conditions in schools, teachers’ skills, and students’ and parents’ expectations. Within the curriculum itself, to find the right balance of creation, performance and appreciation for an effective education in drama will not be easy. (O’Neill 1995b, p.1)

Despite an obvious dearth of activity in the majority of Irish primary schools, but through the dedicated advocacy of a small number of practitioners (agency), a substantial amount of political progress had clearly been achieved. By 1998 (possibly earlier), John McArdle had been appointed as ‘Educational Drama Consultant’ to the NCCA Curriculum Committee for Arts Education, and a draft primary curriculum for drama produced. McArdle in the same year (1998) also published a pamphlet under the auspices of the National Theatre proposing a theory of drama and theatre in education. This is particularly notable in that a cross-comparison of the two documents reveals many shared elements.

Interestingly, McArdle notes that the impulse for his theoretical work comes from a feeling of *fin de siècle*, and a sense that contemporary drama education practice has exhausted all possibilities. He is particularly scathing in his analysis of extant classroom practice, noting that ‘(m)uch drama practice is quite banal and clichéd ... precious, self-conscious, portentous and pretentious’ (1998, p.7), and mourning the loss of character (to role), spontaneity and emotion, the teacher-centric nature of much drama work, and particularly, the loss of play.

From this in particular, McArdle proposes a ‘new’ theory that would enable drama to fly on both wings: the two wings in question being drama and theatre.

Some of this shall be returned to in a more substantial fashion presently.

However, what is clear even from a cursory examination at this juncture in the work, is the extent to which the confluence of language, politics and ideology is visible, and furthermore the extent to which they have to be examined in order to begin the demythologising process. A salient example is manifest in the extent to which the personal philosophy and beliefs of one practitioner and the dominant position occupied by him in the creation of an official document, is visible.

Human agency is apparently at play.

The curriculum for drama was published with the rest of the revised primary curriculum in 1999. One of the few critical writings analysing the emergence of the curriculum comes from Sugrue. His political scrutiny of the advent of the curriculum pays particular attention to the fact that ‘(d)rama becoming a “subject” very late in the process for reasons that are not entirely clear’ (2004, p.197). The unfinished analysis raises more questions than it answers:

It appears that Drama became a subject rather than a pedagogical principle at a very late stage in the process, too late to revise other subject documents to reflect its new status. The power plays that elevated it to the status of a subject remain to be scrutinised at another time. (Sugrue 2004, p.197)

Clearly, Sugrue’s insinuation is that human forces beyond and external to those involved in the preparation of the new curriculum were at play. However, it is arguable that the lack of transparency evident in the case of the ascendance of drama to full subject status is quite consistent within Sugrue’s critique of the development of the curriculum as a whole. His overall assessment is that the

revised curriculum ‘rehabilitates, reiterates and elaborates a rhetoric of child-centredness, albeit in modified form, within a language of constructivism’ (2004, p.203). He further notes that the absence of a substantial body ‘of research evidence in the setting concerning the realities of teaching and learning’, combined with the various power relations at play, have resulted in the silencing of a discourse, particularly surrounding standards and issues (*ibid*). It can be argued that the point he is making, is that language (or lack thereof) has clearly shaped a sets of myths surrounding the curriculum.

The following sections of this chapter and the subsequent chapters, will strive to give voice to elements of that discourse through the further development of the *bricolage*, and will endeavour to examine myths in the four overlapping and intersecting areas noted earlier, with their concomitant implications for understanding structures of power, ideology and discourse within the educational system. The length of discussion of each of the constituent myths will vary as the need arises. Some of the mythic areas to be discussed access broader areas of critical concern, and necessitate lengthy discussion and delineation. Others, once identified through use of the PoET, become readily accessible to the viewer.

### **Governing Myths**

Those myths classified as governing myths within this *bricolage* operate at a macro level in the field and community of drama as education. They are commonly regarded as unquestionable beliefs or policy, though they are rarely explicitly articulated in language, and are usually seen as established truths or



givens. The strengths of governing myths lie primarily in their ideological and political dominance. They directly influence the cultural and educational intermediaries through which drama as education is mediated and they have an indirect but ongoing influence on, and relationship with, traditional and epistemological myths.

Governing myths operate on a level that is fundamentally linked with cultural and societal concerns, as well as what might be described as economic impulses. They represent the dominant forces in any given field or community. They foreground ideological concerns, and specifically outline the parameters of the manner in which the educational system is charged with the reproduction of cultural and societal 'norms'. This is a viewpoint widely accepted and reflected amongst critical educational theorists such as Michael Apple:

The study of the interconnections between ideology and curriculum and between ideology and educational argumentation has important implications for the curriculum field and for educational theory and policy in general. ... How, *concretely*, may official knowledge represent ideological configurations of the dominant interests in a society? (Apple 1990, p.14)

The necessity of beginning to acknowledge and understand the existence of these myths is reflected in this, and also in the recognised dearth of critical research texts in drama as education. Two particular examples are worthy of examination here.

### **The Place of Drama as Education in Formal Education**

In their enthusiasm for supporting a particular educational fashion, our leaders in drama education have sometimes inadvertently distorted the

nature of drama itself. ... By looking at past mistakes, we may well be in a better position to assess the place of drama in today's curriculum. We shall consider the theory and practice of great educators who recognized the needs of their times and who hammered out principles and methodologies to meet those needs. In order to do this, their assumptions about the relationships between the art of drama and children's education have not always been well founded. (Bolton, 1985, pp.151-152)

Bolton addresses the question of why should drama form a part of a national school curriculum, or indeed any enlightened concept of education. Ongoing though this debate may be, the very existence of the Irish primary drama curriculum demands an answer to this question. Some attempts are made to answer it throughout the PoET. The claim being made here is that the reasons why drama is a subject on the primary curriculum and the manner in which it intersects and co-exists with the other areas of arts education as well as the curriculum at large are never satisfactorily presented, explored or defended. The mere fact that the curriculum exists is clearly an indication of some commitment to drama. However this commitment is never justified, nor substantiated in the PoET by either reference to an existing tradition in Irish drama as education, or by way of a new rationale for drama as education citing research or developments elsewhere. Within the context of this thesis, it is held that this stance is highly mythic, and ultimately, deeply problematic.

A cursory examination of the increasingly broad range of texts available to drama as education practitioners leads to the discernment of a relevant trend. Attention is paid in the vast majority to the provision of a rationale of some sorts as to why drama should be taught in schools. This is interesting for a variety of reasons. Given that readers of the texts are, one assumes, unlikely to require much persuasion to teach drama, in that they have consulted the volume in the

first instance, it can only be supposed that the provision of a pre-emptive defence of drama as education is necessary as some form of armament for the reader, for future use. This leads to an assumption that perhaps sometimes drama has to fight for its very existence. Further reading of more historiographically orientated texts bears this supposition out, with two generations of writers in the broader community of drama as education persistently and repeatedly feeling the need to give time and attention to a defence of the place of drama in schools. Neelands goes so far as to suggest the task of *animateur* is one of the core roles of the drama teacher, noting that for many schools, 'drama is at best an optional activity that has a fairly marginal status within the curriculum' (1998, p.42). He suggests that a successful teacher of drama needs to be in a position to defend the 'unique contribution' that drama makes both within the curricular framework, and as an extra-curricular activity. As noted previously by Drury, this unique nature of drama is problematic, if potential-laden. What it can mean is that drama very often defies clear delineation on a plethora of operational levels; within a broader community, in curriculum, in schools, and especially amongst practitioners.

The root of much of this lack of clarity lies in the discourse of the community. Fleming (2001), in an attempt to provide a fresh perspective on the history of drama teaching (primarily within the UK), notes that issues of language, and in particular of a lack of agreement in the language of drama teaching, have always come to the fore. Many of these linguistic difficulties were obvious in the exploration of Hornbrook's attempts at demythologising, and include *inter alia*, lack of definition, clarity and agreement surrounding the words and phrases, drama, theatre, drama-in-education, process drama, living through, acting and

performance. Citing Bolton's (1984) assessment of the field as one riven with rivalry and polarity, Fleming suggests that many false dawns of consensus have emerged only to be quickly recognised as such. And whilst his book itself strives to further the basis of potential consensual understanding in areas such as assessment, progression, form, script, language and aesthetics, Fleming himself concludes by placing his stock not in a new beginning, as his rhetoric seems to advocate, but firmly within the parameters of one of the long-established camps:

Drama in education practice brought a strong element of Dionysian animation surging energy, creativity and significance onto the drama teaching scene. Mistakes were made; boundaries were exceeded. But the alternative approach is to risk a form of complacent certainty which derives from the tyranny of form over content, structure over experience and logic over meaning. (2001, p.148)

In this, Fleming reveals the extent to which deeply divided perspectives do exist with regard to the place of drama in the sector of formal education, and particularly how acts of human agency, often delivered through rhetoric such as that engaged in by Fleming, can serve to further lend substance to the myth.

Turning to the *bricolage* under construction here, the PoET provides a number of entry points in order to begin the construction of an archaeology of this particular myth. The first points of relevance are to be found in the specific aims and general objectives of the curriculum as a whole. Those that are of consequence to arts and drama as education include:

*Specific aim*

To enable children to develop their creative and imaginative capacities through artistic expression and response.

*General objectives*

The child should be enabled to ...

... communicate clearly and confidently using a range of linguistic, symbolic, representational and physical expression.

... develop an appreciation and enjoyment of aesthetic activities, including music, visual arts, drama, dance and language.  
... develop the skills and knowledge necessary to express himself or herself through various aesthetic activities, including music, visual arts, drama, dance and language.  
... acquire a knowledge and understanding of the body and movement, and develop agility and physical co-ordination.

(Govt. of Ireland 1999c, pp. 34-36)

What can be inferred from these is that the curriculum at a macro level has quite a particular vision, albeit somewhat quixotically-inclined and lacking in clarity, as to the function and role of arts education. A more profound insight with regard to that mission exists in the same introductory document:

Arts education enables children to use a range of communicative expression through which they can explore their experience of, and interaction with, the world. It also affords them the opportunity to respond as viewers, listeners or readers to the expressive creativity of the artist, the composer, the writer, and the performer. ... The experience of art deepens children's sense of beauty and artistic expression and makes them more responsive to the nuances of reflection, thought, feeling, attitude, and action. It is, above all, a source of endless enjoyment and fulfilment that can add enormously to the richness of their lives and experience. (Govt. of Ireland 1999c, p.52)

Several diverse perspectives on the importance of the arts exist in this short but significant extract. This is a curriculum that values the arts as a means of witnessing and experiencing the world. It is a curriculum that foregrounds the producers of art as people of importance. Art is about beauty in this curriculum. The ability of children to be more expressive, thoughtful and responsive can be developed through exposure to, and experience in the arts. Finally, art is about personal enjoyment.

A detailed examination of the drama documents reveals a somewhat different orientating perspective and philosophy. It also reveals a fundamental conflict

with the aims and objectives for arts education as espoused above. Affirming that the ‘essence of drama is the making of drama through enactment’, the documents note that ‘successful drama will reflect life in a realistic or metaphorical way and will clarify elements of real life and point up the patterns beneath it’ (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.2). The point is made immediately in the lines that follow that ‘educational drama is not to be confused with what may be termed ‘performance drama’ (*ibid.*). Educational drama is something quite specific:

It is improvisational in nature and has as its aim a quest for knowledge that involves every aspect of the child’s personality: spiritual, moral, emotional, intellectual, and physical. In making this drama the child enters an imagined context (the drama world) through enacting a fiction about characters in certain circumstances, at some particular time and in some particular situation, and so can explore in a unique way conflicts, issues, consequences, attitudes, emotions, concerns and preoccupations that are important to the understanding of real life. (1999b, p.2)

The divergence between the overall aims of the curriculum as a whole and the quite specific orientation of the drama curriculum become apparent when a cross-comparison of the overall intent is carried out. Words such as creative, imaginative, aesthetic, expression and body are relegated to being of secondary and tertiary importance in the drama documents. Indeed, the words art and aesthetic, which figure so prominently in the initial expression of the importance of arts education, are utilised minimally in the two drama documents. They are absent entirely from the statements of aims and objectives for drama (1999b, pp. 8-9).

Leaving aside the question of what sort of drama should be taught in schools, some other issues require consideration here. The markedly obvious lack of coherence between the arts education and drama education aims and objectives

suggest three potential avenues for exploration that might progress an understanding of this mythic stance. First amongst these is the possibility that the aspirations for drama as education in the broadest possible sense are fundamentally and radically different to those for other arts education areas, i.e. that drama as education bears little relation to visual art education and music education. Next is the possibility that a division exists specifically within the Irish context between drama as education and the other arts education areas; for particular cultural, historical or social reasons. Finally, it needs to be considered possible that little debate has taken place in Ireland with regard to the nature and function of arts education, particularly in the writing of the curriculum. This could also have served to stymie the development of overall coherence.

Each of these viable explanations in itself represents a well worn discursive path within the international fields of arts and education. In virtual simultaneity to the turbulent years of the Hornbrook *et al.* debates in drama as education, equally truculent and occasionally vitriolic argument was taking place with regard to the function and form of the arts in education, most notably in the United Kingdom. Much of this found voice in the writings and edited volumes of Abbs (1987, 1989a, 1989b, 1994) and Ross (1989). In these, a great deal of consideration was given to the place of feeling, cognition, emotion, aesthetic, cultural tradition, creativity and expression in the arts. Little agreement was reached, but the multitude of perspectives presented in them remains provocative and salient to ongoing discourse. With regard to the specific issue of drama and its relationship to the broader family of the arts, Abbs presents a detailed critique of the development of drama in education/educational drama. His conclusions are

unequivocal:

I *do* believe there is a way forward for drama as an arts discipline. What I think has happened over the last four decades is that *one genre of drama based on improvisation* has been turned into a self justifying totality. What is needed now is to place that segment back into the vast circle of drama, with all its genres, all its techniques, with all the commanding work in our culture and across cultures ... The *dynamic approach* fostered by educational drama (and child drama) must be kept. It is a map which needs radically enlarging; it is the subject which needs reclaiming. (1994, p.130)

This is a view that seemed to find some sympathy elsewhere. The perspective of some was that in many practitioners falling full sway behind the drama in education movement, drama as education in schools had positioned itself quite a distance from the general thrust of arts education. Some credibility can therefore be attached to the argument that drama as education has historically, and continues to be, somewhat separated from the mainstream body of arts education.

Contemporaneous (1970's/1980's/1990's) Irish writings on arts education, either individual or institutional, are not plentiful. Much of the concern shown over the years was to exhort teachers to become more involved in making a place for the arts in classrooms, or citing massive institutional neglect on the part of the state towards arts education. Benson (1979), the Curriculum and Examinations Board (1985), Drury (1985), the Arts Council (1989) and the National Education Convention (1993) all bemoaned the fact that arts education was in dire straights. As noted earlier in the case of drama, this had some effect in that the White Paper (Govt. of Ireland 1995) finally gave credible institutional recognition to the centrality of the arts in education. It is notable, however, that little real debate seems to have taken place in Ireland with regard to the nature, purpose and form of arts education or the arts in education. One exception to this is an Arts Council



report (1989) on the preceding decade, which differentiates between arts education, and arts in education activities, the former being concerned with ‘the ongoing artistic and aesthetic education of the young person’, and the latter with ‘initiatives in which the artistic community and school community are brought closer together in a range of programmes’ (1989, p.11). This is a dichotomy perpetuated in a more recent Arts Council report (2008). In general terms however, it can be successfully argued that the lack of interrogation of the philosophies that guide the role and place of the arts in Irish schools continues to the present day, with the energies of the small communities involved primarily fixed on advocacy and their roles as *animateurs*, rather than expanding the range of discourse within the various communities.

There is little by way of a widespread formal tradition of drama as education in Ireland, except where pursued by dedicated individual practitioners. This is somewhat different to the other arts education areas. The 1971 curriculum placed strong emphasis on the visual arts, particularly as an element of classroom work that could be highly integrated with other subject. This resulted in a flourishing of children’s visual art, although the quality of some of it is questionable (Sugrue 2004). Music education has a long heritage in Irish schools, primarily because of a strong tradition in teaching sacred music in the religious run training colleges and schools.

The difficulties with a contemporary lack of discourse are manifest in the disparity between the aspirations of drama education with the rest of arts education in the PoET. Ideological and political inconsistency is evident, and the

lack of philosophical coherence and linguistic cohesion at the highest level presents sizeable difficulties to those who have to engage with the PoET. Best observes the difficulty with such a state of play:

If we, committed to drama, cannot offer a soundly argued case, there is surely little or no hope of seeing drama recognised as central to any enlightened concept of education. (Best 2000, p.3)

In terms of constructing an archaeology of this myth, little further excavation is required. The pressing task at hand is as to how to begin to engage in an urgent process of remythologising.

The absence of a clear and defined rationale for drama as education in the PoET, can only lead to problems in the effective implementation and operationalisation of the curriculum. Added to this difficulty is the fact that this new curriculum must win popular acceptance and begin to function effectively within a context in which systemic educational change is difficult to achieve (Coolahan 1981, Mulcahy & O'Sullivan 1989, O'Sullivan 2005). A failure to have a strong basis for the desired changes could ultimately result in the status quo remaining in place. One example of this will suffice to adequately illustrate the importance of beginning to address the unquestioned existence of this myth. At no point in the PoET is any reference made to Irish cultural traditions in drama. This is self-defeating on a number of levels, in that it denies the community some cultural credibility and 'rootedness', but moreover, it fails to recognise the existence of an aspect of traditional practice which would in actual fact support the case being made for process drama in the curriculum. An oral, communal aesthetic tradition

of drama<sup>xviii</sup> exists in Ireland which is widely acknowledged (Kavanagh 1946, Gailey 1969, Fitz-simon 1979, Donnelly & Miller 1998, Fletcher 2000, Morash 2002) but rarely referred to in a collective sense or by means of an umbrella term. It existed long prior to the arrival of the anglicised private, literary aesthetic tradition which is now synonymous with the term theatre. The oral communal aesthetic tradition, however, shares clear characteristics with process drama, and could provide strong historical precedent for the new direction for drama as education proposed in the PoET. The variation of drama as education described in the PoET is oral, communal, and with a primarily efficacious outlook. The PoET is also a clear example of an intra-aesthetic pedagogic approach, not in the same sense intended by Neelands (2004), but insofar as it does not look beyond the singular aesthetic and pedagogic approach as laid down in the document. This is as opposed to the broader church of a para-aesthetic approach, which recognises the centrality of the social/artistic dialectic in the widest possible sense.

Conor McPherson, one of the most prominent contemporary Irish playwrights, hints at the power of the oral, communal and para-aesthetic nature of Irish dramatic heritage, and notes them as being of greater importance than any other:

Theatre can still raise the hairs on our heads because it taps into the communal religious experience of gathering together to witness a story. The audience are taken inside themselves while being part of a social group. It's the best of both worlds in a bizarre way – the group goes on a kind of communal dream. And it works. That's why it's survived thousands of years and countless civilisations. ... I believe this is because we are still, at root, a superstitious people. We were intensely spiritual and pagan for thousands of years before we were Christian. In my eyes, somewhere such as Newgrange has more mystery and primal power than

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<sup>xviii</sup> The terms 'oral, communal' and 'private, literary' aesthetic traditions are taken from Neelands (1998). Further discussion regarding their usage will take place later in this chapter.

any chapel I've ever known. This is our pagan heritage and our theatre may be our pagan church, one where we can laugh and cry, and even search for God, in original, diverse ways. (McPherson 2008, p.8)

McPherson mistakes the communal aspect of the experience as having its roots solely in religious practice, whereas the 'impulse' for such drama is understood here as having broader roots in cultural, sociological and ritualistic needs. However, the example stands regardless.

Therefore, one of the major problems evident in beginning to excavate this governing myth is that it entirely fails to sufficiently ground or locate what it proposes as a new tradition within the complex socio-historical context hinted at by McPherson. Ironically, the nub of the problem is that what is proposed in the PoET is not an entirely new tradition, but simply a modern-day variant of the oral, communal aesthetic tradition.

The question of what critical tools can be employed in order to fully engage with a process of demythologising is relatively straightforward. Writings from drama, theatre performance studies and education from Ireland and further afield need to be examined with a view to making available a range of possibilities and opinions with regard to where drama should be located within the formal educational system and why exactly it should be there. What needs to be illuminated is the variety of understandings that can be associated with drama as education. What needs to be realised is that the difficulty the community has had in establishing itself thusfar is because of a distinct failure to do this. The reality is that a dearth of 'serious' academic writings in drama as education has allowed this myth to flourish unchecked. Not since the prolific offerings of Courtney

(1974, 1982, 1980, 1987, 1990), and to a lesser extent Bolton (1979, 1984, 1992, 1998) has the community had voices that carried some sway and credibility both internally and within both the wider fields of theatre and education. Relatively newer voices such as Neelands, Fleming, Winston, Gallagher, etc. have in recent years begun to fill this void with highly regarded research, but it will take some time before the effect of their work becomes sufficiently internalised to impact upon an entity as powerful as a governing myth. The reason for this is self-evident: a myth of this nature has deeply-rooted strengths in ideology, power and language. None of the more recent work has yet reached that point.

A discernible trend in the international community of drama as education has been the diversification of discourse to include applied theatre and the use of drama in a wide range of non-school settings. Whilst welcome, this has resulted in a distinct decline in the specific discourse of the place/status/philosophy of drama in formal educational systems. A specific example of this would be the leading research journal in the community, *Research in Drama Education*. A search through the abstracts of recent volumes<sup>xix</sup> reveals that of fifty-four original articles published, only seven dealt with some aspect of teacher-oriented drama praxis<sup>xx</sup> in primary or secondary schools. This trend is further evidenced by the imminent change in nomenclature of the journal to reflect its broader thrust.

There is a fine line to be tread in terms of locating drama as education within formal education systems. Neelands (2004) argues cogently that drama may have

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<sup>xix</sup> The issues examined were volumes 11 (nos.1-3), 12 (nos.1-3) and 13 (nos.1-2), from 2006-2008.

<sup>xx</sup> This is understood as work driven by the teacher in his/her classroom, as opposed to theatre in education work, visiting drama programmes, etc.

greater transformative value if it continues to reside on the periphery of schools system, as it has an outsider value which can help students to recognise the 'other' in themselves. This is in comparison to the regulation and domestication that inevitably results from being at the heart of a system. Such a situation may well be the case and a discernible sense of community and solidarity undoubtedly exists in drama as a result of its outsider status. However, a decline in the levels of discourse within the community can only continue to be detrimental. If drama as education is content to remain on the periphery of systems, and recognises the inherent possibilities of such, that is fine, as long as there is a shared recognition as to why that is the case. This can only be achieved through discourse. Otherwise, drama as education is not an outsider, but simply on the outside.

### **The Rhetoric of Drama as Education**

(T)he drama teaching area is marked by claims which are unrealistic in terms of curriculum action and design. (O'Hara 1984, p.318)

Given the nature of governing myths, the second of these is no less esoteric and difficult to pin down than the first. This is accentuated by the somewhat fleeting nature of rhetoric. The claim being made here is that the language of drama as education is overly rhetorical and actively militates against both the strengthening of a rationale and basis for drama in Irish primary schools, as well as the effective implementation of the 1999 primary curriculum. This claim transcends a number of other areas of myth, but is substantive enough to warrant a section of its own. This is because, regardless of the particular issue being discussed, there is a clear and overarching problem with the manner in which language is employed in the PoET.

Historically, and as seen in the analysis of Hornbrook, rhetoric has been of major consequence in the community of drama as education. Fleming draws upon Wittgenstein in his interrogation of language and meaning in drama as education (2001, pp.126-133), and suggests that the claims and counter-claims made both for and against the effectiveness of various ways of working in drama have served for nothing but to defeat the progress of the community as a whole, regardless of the perspective held. He makes the case for less singularity of intent but more definition in usage:

It is not necessary to seek for one single definition of ‘drama’ which can be applied in all cases nor to assume that a term can be used to mean whatever one wants it to mean (a not uncommon misinterpretation of the family resemblance views). It is important to be alert to the fact that demarcating concepts in particular ways may be misleading or useful depending on the specific context. (Fleming 2001, p.129)

O’Connor broadly agrees with this perspective, but interestingly makes the point that the ongoing search for definition in language and meaning have also served to progress the developing practice and philosophical thinking of process drama (2003, p. 45). The most comprehensive critique of rhetoric in operation is to be found in Neelands’ article (2004), where he specifically looks at the transformative rhetoric of drama – the various claims made that drama is a force for change in the lives of children. These claims, to his mind are insufficient, as they are made without addressing the importance of human agency in the act of potential transformation. Neelands argues for a more critical approach based on contemporary thinking, on the part of those making the case for drama. Much of what he says has direct relevance for this project, particularly his demand for a search for the ‘other’. But he feels this search should not take place solely in the

narrow tradition of intra-aesthetic pedagogies of drama, but instead broader parameters regarding the function and scope of drama need to be distinguished, and a move facilitated toward para-aesthetic pedagogies of drama. Para-aesthetic pedagogies explore the artistic/social dialectic, and are fertile grounds for those aspiring to personal and social transformation in drama. What is particularly important from Neelands' work is that he is not content to simply identify this dualism, but in reaching towards his 'quest to theorize the ground and conditions in which local instances of personal change and transformation, or 'miracles', are claimed' (2004, p.53), he succeeds in critically framing the myths around the rhetoric of intra-aesthetic pedagogies, such as the one under discussion here, thus paving the way for the demythologiser.

Current debate in the community of drama as education seems to have moved away from the politics of language, but some of the same issues raised by Neelands can be seen clearly mirrored in some of the formative writings of applied theatre, such as Thompson (2003), Nicholson (2005), Neelands (2007a), and less so in others, e.g. Taylor (2003). This trend is salient here because although it is contributing to the scholarly discourse of the community, it is a tendency that potentially endangers the continued process of demythologising the particularly entrenched and deeply-rooted myth of rhetorical language. As noted previously, the move within drama as education away from a traditional focus on classroom practice and towards applied theatre has become pronounced. The reasons for it are multifarious, but are primarily derived from the needs of practitioners (particularly researchers) to garner cultural capital in the fields of education or theatre. Ironically, in a post-modern era that espouses



multidisciplinarity, the rationalisation of research output and the downgrading of much educational research by Universities has threatened the very sort of work that is essential to furthering the discourse of the community of drama as education.

It is useful to identify a more applied understanding of rhetoric that the broader discussion presented in Chapter Four. A review of the rhetorics of creativity by Creative Partnerships (CP) in the UK provides a parallel. Their understanding of rhetoric is as a subset of discourse, with three specific properties. In the first instance, they are highly elaborated structures, drawing on distinctive traditions of philosophical, educational, political and psychological thought. They are organised to persuade, as a form of ‘communicative action’ (Habermas, 1984), seeking to bring about consensus, leading in some cases to intervention in specific contexts of practice. Finally, they produce discursive frameworks such as key terms and taxonomies which can be learnt by practitioners who either need them or are obliged to use them. In this way they feed back into more general ‘popular’ discourses (Banaji *et al.* 2006, p.7).

This description provides a useful basis for discussion, with the understanding that within the framework of this analysis, rhetoric is a distinctive and important element of myth, which is itself the highly elaborate structure that draws on diverse traditions of thought, referred to in the first bullet point of the CP description. This mythic framework serves to foreground the importance of rhetoric even more clearly as it places it within a model that identifies the manner in which it functions, not only on a discursive level, but on ideological and

political levels also.

The objectives of the CP review are also broadly aligned with this study, in that they seek to identify extant rhetorics and propose themes through which they can be interrogated, but also ‘to make the argument that creativity can be seen more productively through these rhetorics than through narrow and unchanging characterisations that seek to endorse particular definitions, making different stances more entrenched and more difficult to reconcile and debate’ (Banaji *et al.* 2006, p.7). Some of the characterisations that are laid bare as rhetorics in the CP report include the ideas of creative genius and ubiquitous creativity, as well as much of the discourse surrounding play and creativity, creativity and cognition, etc. In each of the discussions, familiar ideas of creativity that are bandied about in general parlance become instantly identifiable as rhetoric. More saliently, academic positions and many ‘respectable’ academic theories are also clearly seen as such.

Within the Point of Entry Text (PoET), numerous inferred claims for drama as education exist that can be understood as rhetorical. The assertion being made in recognising them as an area of governing myth, is that there is little clarity in language or discourse or indeed substance in research-based enquiry to back them up. The claims made are disparate, ranging from the educational to the psychological to the artistic –

**Educational:** (Educational Drama) has as its aim a quest for knowledge that involves every aspect of the child’s personality: spiritual, moral, emotional, intellectual and physical. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p. 2)

**Educational:** (T)he child learns through drama in a different way than through any other subject. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.17)

**Educational:** Drama can help the child to understand and come to terms with, at a very practical level, any disadvantage accruing from the child's environment. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.45)

**Psychological:** (Educational Drama) can help the child to assimilate a changing environment through anticipating psychological development and through allowing him/her to transcend immediate experience by trying out other worlds through drama. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.4)

**Artistic:** It is through 'entering into' the different character in the drama and playing the characters in various roles in the context of the drama that the children experience the drama process. Taking a role can be described as pretending to be someone or something else while character refers to the entire intellectual, emotional and physical make-up of a real or fictional person. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.10)

In noting these points of emphasis, it can be argued that the PoET is going no further than what is demanded of any official text such as a curriculum. But what is at issue here, and what is held as mythic is the lack of transparency attached to any of the rhetoric, i.e. the heightened claims, in the PoET. The implications of this heightened language are manifold, and the influence of this myth is entirely negative. Rhetoric aside, some of the positions adopted (i.e. educational, artistic, psychological, etc.) in the documents are themselves highly mythic and will be explored presently.

The substantive difficulty in all this is that the specific understanding of drama as education (or lack thereof) posited within the PoET is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, a widely-felt and broadly established formal (schools) tradition of drama as education does not exist in the Rep. of Ireland. This has clear benefits and disadvantages, given that on the surface at least, a 'clean slate' existed for the establishment of drama in Irish primary schools. The challenge that lay in place for the authors of the curriculum was that what has been contained

in a document such as the PoET needs not only to inform teachers, it needs to proselytise and persuade teachers to begin using drama in their classrooms. The rhetorical nature of the texts militates against this. In the second instance, and as an official document, the PoET offers one of the few insights the artistic (theatrical) community have into the manner in which drama is taught and should be taught in schools. The lack of consistency, clarity and penetration in the rhetoric of the curriculum can only be counter-productive to the need of such a document to be communicative in nature. What may appear as outlandish or over-the-top claims, will undoubtedly be dismissed as such, given the lack of any rigorous arguments to substantiate the cases being made. Finally, the discernible lack of logic and uniformity in language throughout the PoET both internally within the drama documents themselves, and between them and other areas of the primary curriculum makes no sense, and is also clearly an example of the rhetoric of drama as education in action.

The question as to why rhetoric dominates these texts to the extent that it does can be answered by again examining the nature of the fields of drama/theatre and education, as well as the community of drama as education. Bourdieu notes that position taking and power relations in a field of struggles, varies with the degree of autonomy experienced by the field:

The state of power relations in this struggle depends on the overall degree of autonomy possessed by the field, that is, the extent to which it manages to impose its own norms and sanctions on the whole set of producers, including those who are closest to the dominant pole of the field of power and therefore most responsive to external demands (i.e. the most heteronomous); this degree of autonomy varies considerably from one period and one national tradition to another, and affects the whole structure of the field. (1993, p.40)

Leaving aside for a moment the difficulties surrounding field and community noted in Chapter Three, it is interesting to look at the concept of field as it applies to (not all but some) of the practitioners of drama as education. Applying Bourdieu's understanding to the case in hand, two matters need to be considered: the degree of autonomy, and the power orientation of the 'field' of drama as education. As previously discussed, the 'field' is highly autonomous, and the most heteronomous position-takers are those academics that hold dual-membership of the fields of drama/theatre and education. The implications of this for rhetorical discourse are that it is possible for rhetoric to flourish in the 'field' as the superior field of power relations is at quite a remove, thus allowing it to exist unchecked. Secondly, those position-takers who perpetuate rhetoric are also the most autonomous in the 'field'; i.e. they possibly are the least powerful producers within the overarching fields, who hold little by way of cultural capital, and exist on the periphery of the of either drama/theatre and education, or only possess membership of one of those fields.

The concept of a community of drama as education also offers some illumination as to the continued existence of rhetoric. Bauman (2001) notes the extent to which security is central to contemporary community. It is no different in this case. For some, the continued existence (the security) of drama as education, as a discreet community, is guaranteed by resorting to rhetoric. This ensures that a degree of mystique and impenetrability is associated with the community, and it allows the powerful in the community to control access and entry. The most powerful members of a community are those who have long periods of service to the community and whose primary intent is to perpetuate the values and beliefs

of the community, as they perceive them. Thus rhetoric becomes a useful tool in achieving that end.

As seen in the previous discussion of the place of drama within formal education, the manner in which demythologising a governing myth can be engaged with is straightforward, but difficult. Straightforward insofar as the primary reason these myths are so dominant and pervasive is because of a dearth of sustained, open and high-quality research and dialogue in the discourse of drama as education. Difficult because of the strengths of these myths in ideology, language and politics, and their normative and normalising appearance as official belief and policy. A process of demythologising needs to be actively engaged with in order that progress can be contemplated and constructive change envisaged. The way in which this can be achieved is through a deepening and broadening of the discourse in the community. Once further critical insights and perspectives become available through the development of a tradition of thought and analysis in Irish drama as education, which looks to and describes the manner in which ideology, language and politics operate, then and only then, can a process of change be envisaged. O'Sullivan paints a somewhat depressing but ultimately hopeful picture of the challenges facing those who advocate change in Irish education, and places his trust in human agency:

(E)ven when structural fractures and cultural instabilities do not present themselves, the creativity of human agents in intervening in culturally innovative ways remains a potential for change. (O'Sullivan 2005, p.491)

Individual acts of agency can subvert governing myths in a local and immediate fashion, but a concerted period of demythologising is required to remythologise them. As suggested in the earlier reference to O'Connor (2003), this need not be

a period of turmoil and radical change – it can serve to further and expand the discourse of the community even though it could potentially have serious difficulties on structural as well as interpersonal levels. Regardless, the current governing myths must be seen as quite dangerous and highly detrimental to future growth and development.

**CHAPTER SIX**  
**TRADITIONAL MYTHS**

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Tradition pervades every aspect of life, forming a set of ‘natural’ and ‘accepted’ practices that touch upon virtually everything, including drama and education. In order to distinguish the critical idea of an ‘invented tradition’ from colloquial usage of terms such as custom and ritual, Hobsbawm offers the following definition:

‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. ... However, insofar as there is such reference to a historic past, the peculiarity of ‘invented’ traditions is that the continuity with it is largely factitious. In short, they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition. (1992, pp.1-2)

This idea of tradition as a constructed entity parallels with Barthes’ original concept of myth, but Foucault considers it a ‘notion’ to be rid of in the search for a new history. He suggests that tradition has several characteristics as a ‘notion’, in that it ‘is intended to give a special temporal status to a group of phenomena that are both successive and identical’, and ‘enables us to isolate the new against the background of permanence, and to transfer its merit to originality, to genius, to the decisions proper to individuals’ (1972, p.23). That is, Foucault sees tradition as a device that ensures continuity, but foregrounds newness. Most importantly, it is a constructed device. Within contemporary cultural studies, Kieberd’s (1996) lengthy analysis of the literature of 20<sup>th</sup> century Ireland takes the strongly post-colonial position that Irishness itself is an invented tradition, essential to the creation of an identity of a new nation.

A trend of diverse critical thinking begins to emerge which understands tradition as other than the benign idea of following in the well-worn steps of forefathers.

Looking specifically at the fields under discussion here, both performance studies (Schechner 1993, 1998, 2002) and social anthropology (Turner 1982, 1987) seek to problematise the colloquial idea of tradition (particularly performative traditions and rituals) and look to establish the functions and purposes of tradition within contemporary cultures. The Irish educational system is widely regarded as very traditional in outlook (Sugrue 2004, O'Sullivan 2005); tradition in this case being synonymous with conservative and slow-to-change.

Traditional myths in this work have particular strengths in language and ideology, and particularly in discourse, as they are rarely captured in official policy or documents, and are often communicated informally or orally. They can best be described as somewhat analogous to 'unofficial knowledge'. Whilst they may not be entirely conformist with the more 'sacred' governing myths, they certainly do not subvert them. Where they have a direct and discernible influence is on the operational myths or practice of a field or community, and on the manner in which newcomers are inducted into the field and community. They strongly shape and naturalise the operation of the educational and cultural institutions within this mythic typology, and directly impinge upon the development of operational myths. To new entrants to the field and community, they are presented as normal and standard ways of working, into which the newcomers must be inducted, and in whose ways they must become proficient before being accepted as fully fledged members of the field or community.

One difficulty with the concept of traditional myths as proposed in this project is their unofficial and supposed unwritten status. The Point of Entry Text (PoET)

being utilised here is of course an official document, but a reminder is appropriate that the PoET is merely a pivot and axis (Kincheloe & Berry 2004) through which the *bricolage* can be accessed and constructed. With the traditional myths under discussion here, although specific textual references are made, they merely allude to or hint at a broader area of myth, which itself is unwritten.

### **The Understanding of the Role Drama Plays in the Lives and Learning of Children**

The claim at the heart of this traditional myth is that the curriculum presents a confused, flattened and problematic understanding of the manner in which children learn, in and through drama. It will be held that the educational understanding suggested in the PoET represents an unsubstantiated and confused variant of a single strand of the discourse in the community of drama as education over the course of the last half-century.

Every contribution to, and each practitioner in the community espouses a slightly different variant of how and why drama should play a prominent and active part in the lives of children. Some make that contribution eloquently and in a rigorous and insightful manner, but many do not. As frequently noted throughout this thesis, drama as education has had a divisive and colourful evolution. Few writers have attempted to chart that journey. Anderson (2002) describes it in three distinct chronological eras: the Pre-Heathcote era, the Heathcote era, and the Heathcotian Structuralist era. He traces a path through the work of Caldwell

Cook, Slade, Way, Heathcote herself, Bolton, and on to the more contemporary contributions of O'Neill, Neelands, Morgan & Saxton and O'Toole & Haseman. In doing so, Anderson presents in a succinct and accessible fashion the manner in which their drama praxis has evolved and shaped the community within which they operate. His focus is on their contribution to curriculum development, particularly in the English, and latterly the American and Australian traditions. Doyle's (1993) analysis focuses on drama as a site for critical pedagogy and describes some of the varying claims of others for drama, as well as contributing some of his own. He suggests that:

Writers in the field approach drama education from different view points. A further review of the literature on drama education reveals differences in underlying assumptions held by writers in the field. We now know that such underlying assumptions are far from neutral and that they direct the very outcomes of education. (1993, p.56)

Bolton's quasi-historiographical analysis (1998) provides a more detailed account than those mentioned above. It is arguably the most authoritative overarching account of the development of the community, and as a unifying claim, Bolton makes the case for acting as *the* conceptual framework for drama as education. The core precepts of his claim revolve around what he sees as shared values in entry into fiction, as well as the 'mimetic, aesthetic, generalising, communicating and focusing features commonly associated with acting' (1998, p.250). The potential validity of Bolton's acting framework will be returned to presently.

Returning to the PoET, clear indications of existence of this myth can be discerned by gently probing the understandings posited under a range of categories:

**Make-believe play:** There are strong elements of make-believe in all children's play. This make-believe helps the child to test out his/her hypothesis about what the world is like and how it might feel to have certain experiences ... The primary task of the teacher of drama, therefore, is to preserve and encourage this desire to make-believe while at the same time extending it to other areas of life and knowledge. (Govt. of Ireland 1999a, p.5)

The impulse to make-believe is spontaneous in the young child, and when this begins to wane it is important that the teacher fosters and encourages its essential characteristics in drama activity. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.10)

**Living-through drama:** (The children will be involved in activities such as) living through a story, making it up as they go along, solving problems in the real and fictional worlds, co-operating with others, and pooling ideas. (Govt. of Ireland 1999a, p.6)

**Content and Uniqueness of drama:** The content of drama is life. It encompasses the entire range of a child's experience and every facet of his/her personality; and because it constitutes a unique way of learning it should be an indispensable part of the child's experience in school. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.5)

**Individual Differentiation:** (Drama) can give each child the opportunity to approach knowledge in the ways that are most suitable to him/her. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.4)

**Story:** It is in (the) act of creating the story that the educationally liberating power of the drama resides. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.16)

### *A Critique of Make-Believe Play*

Each of the areas identified as points of entry have the potential to be critiqued individually with a view to complexifying and problematising the range of educational perspectives they embody. Make-believe play will serve as a suitable exemplar given the constraints of time and space present here. It is the most consistent and coherent of the ideas running throughout the curriculum documents, and is also an idea that has been well-charted as an academic

concern. In the PoET, the idea of a continuum of play is established from the outset:

Make-believe play is the basis of all educational drama. The impulse to make-believe is spontaneous in the young child, and when this begins to wane it is important that the teacher fosters and encourages its essential characteristics in drama activity. (Govt. of Ireland 1999a, p.10)

This claim forms the basis of the understanding the curriculum puts forth regarding the child's relationship with drama and the manner in which s/he learns. It finds little explicit resonance in literature. Bolton (1998) makes the point that much Heathcoteian work has the idea of make-believe play at its heart, but that little overt reference is made to it as a foundational idea. He suggests that this is a Vygotskian idea, and it means that much of Heathcote's praxis fundamentally contrasts with the earlier work of Way and Slade, for whom both the experiential ('doing' drama) held primacy. For Heathcote, of fundamental importance is the making of meaning. Courtney (1974) deals with make-believe play in a more substantial manner, and traces the evolution of all kinds of play in educational thought, specifically linking these understandings of play to drama as education. His work is notable on a number of levels. Educational Psychology was at the time still a relatively fledgling discipline, but growing to become of undeniable importance, particularly in Teacher Education. Courtney was also writing at a time when drama as education as a community was beginning to realise the importance of having a solid theoretical base in order to ensure cultural capital for its proponents within the dominant field of power. In some respects, it could be argued that Courtney's work was ahead of its time, signposting the way, as it does, for hard-nosed, empirically-based research that contextualised drama as education within broader settings.

In terms of the links between play and drama, Courtney is clear. Play is at the heart of all drama, but utilising a variety of different connections. He explores the plethora of ways in which he sees that relationship – psychological, sociological, cultural, anthropological, linguistic, etc. In attempting to establish the epistemological and ontological claims for drama as education, he pushes the boundaries out, but refuses to confine the idea of play to a single developmental strand. A later volume from Courtney moves away from play almost entirely, and focuses on the cognitive outcomes resulting from engagement with drama. In doing so he changes his attribution regarding the fundamental origins of drama, moving away from the broader idea of play to noting that ‘(t)he act of identification and impersonation is the bedrock of all dramatic action: Infantile identifications lead to it, and theatrical acts result from it’ (Courtney 1990, p.37). The point in all this is that neither play, nor its subset, make-believe play, has any widespread recognition as the basis for dramatic exploration.

Within the field of performance theory, Richard Schechner offers a non-psychological outlook on play. He explores anthropological and sociological perspectives throughout his work (1988, 1993, 2002), and probes play as a culturally-specific concept as opposed to a psychological imperative. Linking it intimately with ritualised behaviour, Schechner clearly situates play within the broad church of performance, and aligns it with the role of hunter:

I believe play is what organizes performance, makes it comprehensible. If the distinction I made earlier between play and ritualized behaviour is kept in mind, then clearly play belongs mainly to carnivorous and omnivorous species: hunters. ... Hunting is inherently, not metaphorically, theatrical/dramatic. A script is necessary in order to develop strategies that culminate in a climactic attack-event; agonistic

and cooperative behaviours combine in a complicated way so that a “we and them” mentality is heightened (1988, pp. 98-99)

What links but differentiates play and hunting, but also ritual and performance, is crisis. When a crisis occurs, kinetic energy must be expended in order to meet imminent if sometimes unexpected, needs. Meeting the needs provoked by a crisis is fundamentally a creative endeavour, but this is creativity driven by necessity. Schechner summarises his position thus:

(M)uch play behaviour is adapted from hunting, that hunting is a kind of playing. This kind of playing is strategic, future-and-crisis-oriented, violent and/or combative; it has winners and losers, leaders and followers; it employs costumes and/or disguises (often as animals); it has a beginning, middle, and end; and its underlying themes are fertility, prowess, and animism/totemism. ... It is scripted behaviour. In time, playing/hunting may generate the symbolic activities of ritual and drama. (1988, p.102)

It may well be that Schechner’s work is some worlds away from teaching drama in a classroom, but it adequately illustrates the complexity and breadth of play theory.

Howard Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) (1983) offers another home for an educational idea of play (Gardner & Hatch 1989) and has been taken up by some as a potential panacea for the lack of solid theoretical home for drama (McCarthy 2000). Guss (2005) critiques such positions, and finds that Gardner’s theory falls short in encapsulating what she regards as the fullness of children’s play. Her major criticism is that Gardner links children’s early symbolic products to adult art forms – i.e. as proto-artistic products – a term she regards as having semantic difficulties and as being somewhat reductivist in nature. Instead she argues that symbolic play should be regard as an aesthetic



practice in its own right. Guss also takes some issue with Gardner's assertion that aspects of children's dramatic playing can be solely captured in the MI categories of interpersonal, intrapersonal and bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence, arguing that they are actually restrictive means of identifying the strengths of children who are particularly adept at dramatic playing.

One place where the idea of make-believe play receives substantial attention is in the work of McArdle (1998). As in the curriculum he was primarily responsible for, McArdle locates make-believe play at the heart of all dramatic engagement. The rationale for this is grounded in Vygotsky's 1933 essay on the role of play in development (Vygotsky 1975), subsequently heavily cited by Bolton (1979)<sup>xxi</sup>, and which sought to posit that play was at the heart of meaning-making, and therefore, learning:

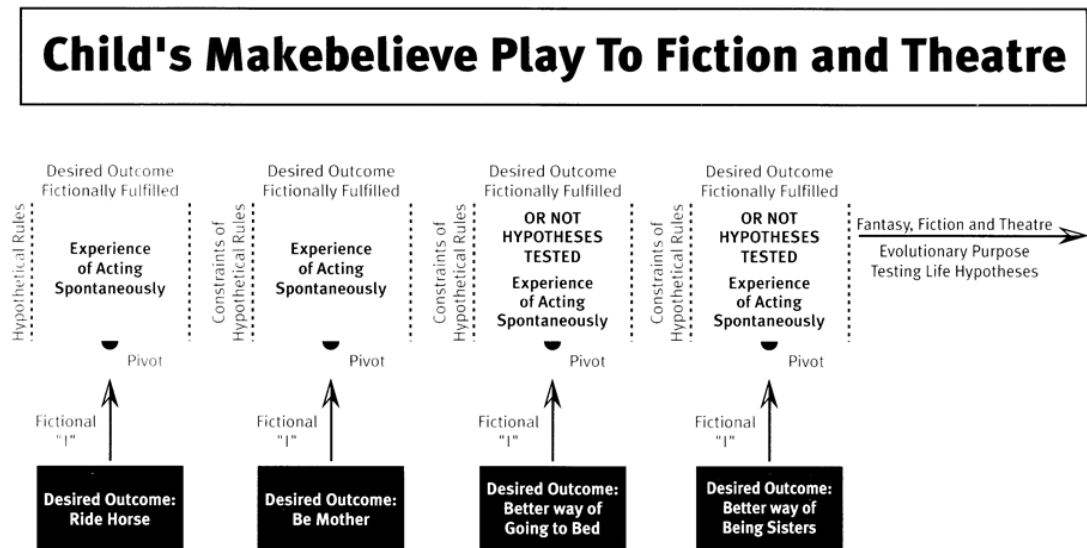
For Vygotsky, the main function of make-believe play is the predominance of meaning. In saying categorically, 'Action retreats to second place', he is spelling out the paradox that is not only key to understanding play but the key to putting drama in an educational perspective. 'Drama is doing' we have been told for years by educationalists and drama specialists. It seems to me that the power of the medium lies in the more correct notion that 'Drama *seems* to be doing'. It is thought-in-action; its purpose is the creation of meaning; its medium is the interaction between two concrete contexts. (Bolton 1979, pp.20-21)

But whereas Bolton proceeds to contextualise this idea within a field of differing theories, notably those of Piaget, McArdle does not do likewise, but instead develops a complex continuum of make-believe play to fiction and theatre, which revolves around the idea of the child 'becoming' the object of their attention whilst at play (see Fig 6.1).

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<sup>xxi</sup> Bolton in subsequent work moved away from make-believe play and focussed upon acting behaviour as the lynchpin of his conceptual framework for drama as education.

This position described by McArdle's theory is one whereby the child's ability to engage with make believe play ultimately governs the extent to which they are able to partake in drama or are proficient at practicing it. He seeks to present as a natural continuum ideas of playing, learning and theatre, holding that proficiency at play can lead to success at the other. This notion is broadly aligned to the idea of 'living-through' which holds some currency in the community of drama as education and which this thesis will later examine as an operational myth.



**Figure 6.1 - Child's Makebelieve Play to Fiction and Theatre**  
(reproduced from McArdle 1998, p.57)

Essentially it will be argued that this is a fallacy of the dominant western reliance on representationally-orientated theatrical genres of naturalism and realism – that is to say, the dominance of the idea that believability somehow dictates the quality of the theatrical experience. This is foremost amongst many criticisms of McArdle's theory, followed closely by its reliance on rhetoric, lack of clarity, lack of academic rigour and restricted distribution and dissemination within the

field and community. However, it is without doubt that McArdle's theory bears most similarity to the conceptual stance of the PoET regarding children, drama and learning. This is perhaps inevitable given that McArdle held the role of 'Educational Drama Consultant' to the design committee. What is particularly striking is the extent to which it dominates the PoET to the detriment of the inclusion of a broad and inclusive range of theoretical approaches.

However, this brief discussion is not intended to be exhaustive dissection of make-believe play, but merely an indication of the complex and diverse views that compromise some of the thoughts on the subject. These contributions are from outside and within the community of drama as education – and as suggested by the varying perspectives offered above, much work could be done to further refine some of the thinking around play and drama. However, this brief account is sufficient to illuminate the mythic nature of the role and contribution that drama makes in the lives of children. It must also be remembered that make-believe play comprises only one leg of the educational philosophy that the PoET lays claim to.

Make-believe play aside, and on entirely more pragmatic level, there is discordance between the drama documents and the remainder of the primary curriculum in terms of how learning is achieved. The introductory document (Govt. of Ireland 1999c) clearly identifies the principles of learning that underpin the curriculum<sup>xxii</sup>, as well as a range of key issues in Irish primary education<sup>xxiii</sup>.

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<sup>xxii</sup> **Principles of Learning:** The child's natural sense of wonder and curiosity; The child as an active agent in his or her learning; The developmental nature of learning; The child's knowledge and experience as a base for learning; Environment-based learning; Learning through guided activity and discovery; Learning through language; The aesthetic dimension; The social and

These, particularly the former, are frequently mirrored and cross-referenced in many of the curriculum documents, but that is not the case with drama. The case can be made that principles such as these are aspirational and removed from the reality of a specific subject curriculum. In response, it should be argued that optics are particularly important in educational discourse, which is comprised of what language is included, but also what language is not included. The separation of the drama curriculum is not just at a discursive level – it is clearly philosophical and educational as well.

When examined cumulatively, these individual insights paint a picture of a mixed-up and at best vague educational philosophy in the PoET. This is highly problematic. At its most benign, this myth ‘allows’ the continued functioning of drama as education in Irish primary schools, whilst somewhat restricting the potential for growth and development of the community, because of the lack of a clear rationale and direction. At its worst, its lack of inclusiveness towards a broad range of ways of learning in and through drama will potentially cause schisms and divisions in the community of drama as education in Ireland. The difficulties this myth presents are fivefold: (i) It is not fully fleshed out enough to represent a dominant or sufficient theory of drama as education; (ii) It is not broad enough to cater for the range of cultural diversity and drama practices that may be found in Irish classrooms into the future; (iii) It is not sufficiently

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emotional dimensions of learning; The integration of learning; The transfer of learning; Higher-order thinking and problem solving; Collaborative learning; Taking account of individual difference (Govt. of Ireland 1999c, pp.14-17).

<sup>xxiii</sup> **Key Issues in Irish Primary Education:** Quality in education; Literacy and numeracy; A sense of Irish identity; The Irish language; The spiritual dimension; The European and global dimensions; Pluralism; Equality and fairness of access; Partnership; Science education; Information and communication technologies; Children with special needs; Early childhood education; Transition from primary to post-primary; The curriculum and lifelong learning (Govt. of Ireland 1999c, pp.26-31).

grounded in contemporaneous theory to withstand detailed critique; (iv) It is not clear or strong enough in terms of the benefits to children to ‘win’ somewhat sceptical practitioners around to the idea of teaching drama on a regular basis; (v) In terms of the current politics of education, this curriculum is not ‘political’ enough to attract cultural capital in order to improve the lot of drama as education in the Irish primary sector.

What can be extrapolated from this traditional myth is that it represents the ideological dominance of a particular variant of make-believe play as the foundation for all drama as education. This variant seems to represent the specific ideology of one individual who was in a position of power to ensure that it was perpetuated in the curriculum. In this myth can be seen the convergence of ideology, power and language, which through an act of human agency has led to the perpetuation of a traditional myth. Demythologising can only be achieved through remythologising, but this is particularly difficult as the PoET now represents a monument in the Foucaultian sense (1972). Whether a new history can be brought to bear upon the monument depends again on agency.

### **The Universalism of Drama as Education**

(M)yth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal. (Barthes 1972, p.142)

“Universalism” means something like the basic shared mentality that allows individuals to conceive of themselves as *citizens* of a democratic state, one in which citizenship consists of a constellation of interlocking duties and rights that together form an abstract level of popular sovereignty subsisting below – and making possible – the spectrum of particularistic kinds of identity operating within a diverse society. In democratic societies, the capacity for mutual recognition and the generalization of norms must install itself as an attitude that can

reflectively separate from the particular fabric of their own interests.  
(Pensky 1995, p.70)

Demythologising in this category teases out the idea that there may exist a pervasive belief that specific forms of drama as education exist, that can reach all children and help them to learn, no matter what their particular societal or cultural circumstances, or indeed that the individual differences of the child may be. Its classification as a traditional myth will be justified presently. This myth of universalism is based around primarily generic and unquestioned (Westernised) understandings of empathy, identity and shared humanity. It is clearly represented and identifiable in the PoET in a range of areas.

Universalism, as the term is to be utilised here, has two theoretical roots. Primary amongst these is the idea of universalism in tragedy as presented in Castoriadis (1983). Also of significant importance is Habermas' understanding of normative universalism (1984, 1987), where he attempts to show that reason can ground itself in universal principles of communicative action, when combined with ideas of acquisition of knowledge. The philosophical idea of universality is also useful. It is associated with Kant, and understands itself as being in opposition to relativism. At the heart of the idea lies the claim that universal truths, facts and ideas exist. These are fixed and absolute, regardless of context, conceivable as being true in every situation, and are not open to contradiction. Philosophically, universality appears in many guises, but is particularly to be found in the sciences and mathematics.

Universalism however, is more focussed than the broad church of universality, and indeed Habermas argued against the work of his predecessors. The concept has found currency in some contemporary educational research, particularly work that seeks to examine multiculturalism and inter-culturalism. De Moraes (1998) critiques Habermas' vision of a normative universalism, which he sees as the answer to the growing influences of 'technological universalism' and 'normative cultural particularism'. For Habermas, the creation of an ideal-speech situation can only take place if existing norms everywhere are problematised and critiqued in the same manner; i.e. what he terms a normative universalism is created through critical theory in the hope that an imposed technological universalism (which he sees as closely aligned with the forces of globalisation) can be defeated, along with the explosion of some norms which are culturally specific (normative cultural particularism). In straightforward terms, Habermas' aspiration is that all societies should engage with theory (a universal approach in itself, but one he regards as normative), in order that imposed or existing, unquestioned universalisms can be avoided and eradicated:

Habermasian critical theory de-contextualizes a series of theoretical categories in order to provide a (*sic*) normative grounds for social criticism. The resulting universalism of his position successfully resists both the undertow of relativism and the conservatism of more contextual accounts. (Blaug 1997, p.102)

Similar to Habermas, Castoriadis' usage of universalism rejects previous accounts. He provides strong arguments in favor of actively transcending the dilemmas that have resurfaced as the conflict between universalism and relativism. Castoriadis overcomes this antithesis by arguing that whereas the distinctiveness of our historical perspective is a quasi-transcendental precondition of our knowledge, it also defines it positively, since it is only

through the singular/particular that we can access the universal, which is connected to the critique of the particular and the consequent emergence/creation of new social meanings. The implications of this can be seen in, for example, the arena of politics:

But very solid political grounds can turn out to be very shaky, if they are only ‘political’. To put it in another way, precisely because of the the totalistic character of the domain of politics (...), a correct political decision must take into account all factors, beyond the strictly ‘political’ ones. Even when we think, on the best of rational grounds, that we have made the right decision, this decision may turn out to be wrong, and catastrophically so. Nothing can guarantee *a priori* the correctness of action – not even reason. Above all, it is folly to insist on *monos phronein*, ‘being wise alone’. (Castoriadis 1983, p.286)

This perspective is a notable and important one for a community such as drama as education, which has long-premised the core idea that learning occurs by moving from the particular to the universal and returning to the particular<sup>xxiv</sup>

Understandably, universalism as a critical concept is not agreed by all. For example, Southerland (2000) argues that in the arena of science education, a universalist perspective does not take into account the fact that Western ideas of science are fundamentally premised upon the primacy of the laws of the natural world, and in essence, therefore, should be seen as having more credibility. This stance could also be adopted in discussing theatre, but it misses the point of a critical normative universalist stance – that all knowledge is constructed and that all histories are written.

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<sup>xxiv</sup> This language probably originated from a paper by Dorothy Heathcote entitled ‘From the particular to the universal’ c.f. Johnston & O’Neill 1984, pp.103-110.



Within this research, universalism combines both of the powerful perspectives of Habermas and Castoriadis. The proposed area of myth refers to discourse surrounding two distinct but inter-related ideas – (i) Assumptions surrounding the idea that drama as education traditions and practices are universal in nature; and (ii) beliefs as to whether drama as education can be used to seek the universal in the particular. The first question to be asked is whether the traditions and practices of drama as education should remain constant and fixed regardless of the setting in which they are being utilised, and whether similar educational and artistic outcomes should be sought and can be expected. If that is the case, this situation can be regarded as belonging to Habermas’ normative cultural particularism category, but the avoidance of a technological universalism through the creation of a normative universalism is also a concern here. The second question is as to whether the claim surrounding the universal in the particular can be defended or is indeed mythic in nature.

Therefore, the brief critique presented here of the myth of universalism of drama as education seeks not only to address issues of universalism in terms of ‘visible’ difference (ethnicity, social class, religion, etc.) but also difference at the more esoteric level of a shared humanity: i.e. the prevalent westernised assumption that deep-down, all human beings are the same.

The insights from the PoET that suggest the existence of this myth relate to ‘factual’ statements regarding children, the manner in which they learn, the life experiences they have had, and the way in which drama provides opportunities for learning for all children:

The developmental and learning power of drama lies in the particular nature of the dramatic experience. In ... 'knowing and living' the circumstance, dilemmas, choices and actions of a fictitious character, and their consequence. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.3)

The endless possibilities of fiction allow for the exploration of the unbounded range of human experience. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.16)

(T)he improvisational nature of the exploration can give a spontaneous release to the child's intuitions and a context that enables him/her to clarify and to express them. (*ibid*)

Drama provides the child with a unique and potent means of leaning, whatever the content. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.18)

Through (drama) the child could ... 'live through' and come to know what it was like to live then ... (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.18)

(The content of drama will include) drama drawn from children's everyday experience (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.27).

Insecurity may be caused by the child's temperament, his/her family background, the social relationships in the class, or how emotionally safe he/she feels with the teacher. The teacher, in the drama class, can address these problems directly by creating fictions that explore such issues as gender, equity, self-esteem, the valuing of difference, the acceptance of responsibility, or the development of positive attitudes towards problem-solving (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.43).

The world of the imagination allows for the myriad of human possibilities that lie beyond the reach of everyday experience, even beyond the experience of a lifetime. Through it we can explore these possibilities, speculate about them and extend our view of the world. This depends, of course, on our acceptance of the validity of the truth that imagination offers, in the trust we have in its capacity to enrich human experience (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.48).

### *Universal Practices*

In defence of the curriculum being utilised here as a PoET, it can be argued that any curriculum is, by its nature, charged with addressing the learning of a wide and diverse range of children. This is inherent in the nature of curriculum, but does not in any way lessen the critical demand of inclusiveness. It is

acknowledged by Sugrue (2004) and Deegen *et al* (2004) that for a range of reasons, the full breadth of Irish diversity has not been adequately captured or represented in Irish primary education:

While Irish society has come through a period of rapid social change, structures and patterns of participation and representation have not necessarily moved in parallel with this change. ... Irish education continues to operate on an assumption of heterogeneity in terms of ethnicity, religious belief and language. The integrated nature of the primary curriculum is particularly problematic for those who differ from the supposed norm of white, middle-class and Christian. (Deegan, Devine & Lodge 2004, p.7)

The question of whether the idea of drama posited in the PoET can cater for the range of difference in Irish society is a real one. At the level of cultural and sociological theory, it is tied up with the question of identity, to be discussed later in this work. However, this myth is perhaps most pervasive at local levels, where it concerns differing ethnic, religious and social groups. To place an element of the myth in context, one need simply consider the wide range of books and textbooks that are produced for the consumption of the international drama as education community. In the main part, the drama work described in these books is situated in a particular, specific cultural learning environment. Yet, discourse norms within the community allow these works and the specific conventions contained within them to be considered as models of good practice on an international, multicultural and multiethnic level. This is always with the assumed proviso that these works should be adapted for whatever situation the teacher is working in. However, the assumptions contained in this universalising act run deep, and make manifest a plethora of implications for the manner in which the community considers ideas of difference and culture. A simple example illuminates this somewhat vague comment: within the Irish primary

drama curriculum, not one convention or genre is in any ways specific to either of the dominant aesthetic traditions of Ireland. Beyond some of the themes discussed in the exemplars<sup>xxv</sup>, the reader is hard-pressed to locate the PoET in the Irish context for which it was prepared.

### *Universalism in 'Living-through'*

Universalism in the PoET is best accessed through 'living through' – one of the dominant and recurring ideas in the discourse of drama as education. Heathcote placed the idea of 'living through' at the heart of her drama practise, and has been its most influential proponent. Bolton describes her usage:

Her focus was always on one 'internal situation' breeding or 'foreshadowing the next internal' situation, rather than 'plot', whereas the latter prompts a 'what-happens next' mental set, the former is more conducive to 'living through' operating at a seeming life rate, a *modus vivendi* that lent itself to staying with a situation sufficiently long to explore it and understand it more (Bolton, 1998, p.179).

The supporting principle of the idea is that children participating in drama as education work of a particular type can somehow live the lives of others through drama, or at least occupy their shoes momentarily. This in theory creates a situation where the children can empathise with these others and therefore learn about their lives, and ultimately through this process learn a little more about what it means to be human. This view, and variants of it are to be found quite widely in the community most obviously in the work of Heathcote and Bolton, but also notably in Johnston & O'Neill (1984), Neelands (1984), O'Neill & Lambert (1982), O'Neill (1995a), and more recently Walkinshaw (2004). 'Living

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<sup>xxv</sup> Examples of these culturally-specific themes include the Children of Lir, St. Patrick, visitors to Ireland, the Potato Famine, etc.

through’ as a specific idea has been subject to relatively little critical examination. As seen in the previous chapter, Hornbrook repeatedly criticised the fundamentals of the drama-in-education idea, but paid relatively little attention to ‘living through’ as a concept. He did focus on universals as a phenomenological idea, but directed his gaze at what he termed the fallacy of individualism (1998, pp. 66-69). Fleming (2001) plays around with some of the problematic assumptions inherent in ‘living through’, but never fully gets to grips with them. Neelands’ (2000) attempt to seek to re-imagine and re-direct some of the academic thinking associated with process drama, is the first to broach the issue of presentational and representational theatres, and the implications these have for understanding drama as education. He suggests that the ‘living through’ or ‘dramatic playing’ acting style is Stanislavskian in nature and closely aligned with representational forms in theatre: i.e. those that seek to create a parallel dramatic world as truthfully as possible. These ideas are closely associated with the naturalistic and realistic movements first developed by Zöla in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and most famously propounded in the dramatic works of Strindberg, Chekov and Ibsen. They demand a mimetic mode of representation and were premised at the time on the idea that art could hold a mirror up to nature; but also as a response to overly-exaggerated existing dramatic forms such as melodrama. As with any newly developed dramatic genre, at the time naturalism/realism would understandably have been seen as more relevant and ‘truthful’ than previously existing forms: such is the nature of the manner in which new conventions in theatre come about. However, they are now clearly understood as being in no way more real than any other type of representative style of performance:

(N)aturalism in the theatre has nothing directly to do with the ‘natural’, just as realism only implies the real through its manipulated reconstruction or reproduction. These genres are highly artificial conventions. Their well-established techniques and process enable the suspension of belief they ask of audiences, and create the impression that is at their heart. ... However revolutionary it was in the beginning, naturalism’s subsequent mainstream positioning has fuelled many counteractive revolts and experiments, from Dada through Berthold Brecht’s epic theatre to performance art. These have all questioned the social function of art and its forms by focussing on the presentational aesthetics of performance and its processes, as opposed to the supposedly realist representation of everyday life (Allain & Harvie 2006, pp. 178-179)

This argument is at the heart of some of Neelands’ most recent discourse on drama as education, where he argues that ‘the criterion of authenticity and ‘life-likeness’ is still key to our aesthetic judgements of theatre’ (2007b, p.2), and this ‘conflation of realism with reality serves to naturalise the specifically cultural imaginaries of certain social and cultural groups’ (2007b, p.3).

The myth of universalism in drama as education embodies this perspective, and has long been premised upon an understanding of participation that: (i) neglects to recognise a presentational theatre that arguably dominates much contemporary practice in favour of representational theatre; and (ii) adopts as a foundational principle for children’s involvement (and learning) their ability to engage in that representational theatre premised upon the naturalistic/realistic convention of ‘living-through’. This can be clearly seen in the excerpts from the PoET cited above.

In defence of the PoET stands the work of Castoriadis. His philosophical perspectives run contrary to the analysis of the preceding paragraphs but it should also be considered that it is coming from a differing critical position, with

Castoriadis focussed on matters ontological. In his defence of the universal in the particular/singular, he provides a potential theoretical defence to ‘living through’, but one which is entirely undeveloped. Developing it is not as straightforward as might be assumed:

In some ways, Castoriadis’ radical insight is both simple and familiar: the subject learns to become a being in relation to others it encounters, learning values, behaviours and modes of thinking within the nexus of culture, language and social relations. However, rather than taking a naïve view of this process, Castoriadis sees that this is an inevitably violent demand society places on its subjects. Through social institutions, society exerts a force upon the subject to become, for example, a worker, citizen or consumer (or in other social-historical circumstances, feudal lords, peasants or anointed kings). Insofar as education is a socializing institution par excellence, what Castoriadis underscores here is not only the need to speak of the violence in education, but the violence of education. ... Pedagogically speaking, the simplicity of Castoriadis’ insight is deceptive, for, although it seems to depict, in a straightforward fashion, the ontological possibilities of learning, it also highlights the ethical aspects of learning itself, insofar as learning is accompanied by a certain violence to the subject. (Todd 2001, p.433)

However, what all the above does clearly sign-post is the existence of a substantial area of myth as it is understood in this thesis. The implications of this mythic stance are numerous. It can be argued that by making the claim that all children can learn in a similar fashion through the form of drama as education contained in the curriculum – process drama, and that this form of drama is accessible to all children, individual difference and learning styles are completely ignored. Similarly, and as seen previously, cultural differences are arguably disregarded by the assumption that children of differing social, religious and ethnic backgrounds can interact with a singular dramatic form in the same way.

O’Connor (2003) attempts to mediate the idea of the universal in his analysis of process drama, particularly as it is presented in the work of Heathcote and Bolton

and developed in O'Neill. He cites O'Toole's (1998) assertion that the notion that drama can lead to an understanding of the deeper truths of the universals of humanity is indeed a misguided endeavour, which had lead to stridency and sanctimoniousness. Instead, O'Connor suggests that the act of reflection in drama as education 'does not draw out an understanding of some universal value system for humanity. Instead it draws to the particular life of the participants' (2003, p.279). It could well be the case that this more reasonable perspective on universalism is central to the ideological and political perspective shared by the authors of the Irish primary curriculum, but if this is the case, the language and the discourse of the documents certainly do not make this idea accessible. The tradition of unquestioning acceptance of ideas, and uncritical acceptance of language in drama as education is particularly evident in this area of myth and it has not served the community well regardless of how 'universal' it is felt that particular facets of drama practise may be. In actual fact, it is a very visible example of Habermas's cultural particularism in action. The case for ideal speech situations and a normative universalism to be established in drama as education through a process of remythologising is manifest.

The explanation as to why the myth of universalism pervades as a traditional myth is a relatively straightforward one. Universalism in the form of 'living-through' was one of the earliest theories put forth, and by a figure (Heathcote) with widely recognised power, cultural capital and status in the field and community. She was also a persuasive practitioner and orator. In the absence of a more convincing and widely-disseminated rationale in the intervening period, Heathcote's foundational understanding of 'living-through' drama has become a



given; an institution in itself; a tradition. Demythologising will not only require powerful figures with agency, it will also demand an ideologically persuasive and discursively accessible replacement in the remythologising.

**CHAPTER SEVEN**  
**EPISTEMOLOGICAL MYTHS**

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Myths residing in this category pertain to issues of knowledge. Given the nature of this thesis, issues of knowledge under discussion here fall specifically within the field of drama/theatre as described in Chapter One, and delineated and discussed in Chapter Three. In this typology of mythology, epistemological myths have explicit strengths in ideology and language as with traditional myths, but influence the operation of educational and cultural intermediaries in a very different way. Foucault (1972) clearly links the creation of knowledge with discursive formations, which are subject to direct influence from structures of power. The shape of the discursive formations in the community of drama as education, are shaped most immediately by epistemological myths. They dictate the parameters of discursive validity, and as noted in the brief introduction earlier, only those who hold high levels of cultural capital and symbolic power within a field can dare to expand or subvert, on either an ideological or discursive level.

Epistemological myths detail the nature of what should be taught, and influence operational myths with regard to the way in which it should be taught – they represent the practical manifestation of official knowledge. As epistemological myths represent knowledge in its official form, but more importantly in its functional form, they have real credibility for a plethora of reasons. They are local – they represent the variant of official knowledge modified to some extent to suit the specific needs of the cultural or educational site. Their relationship with governing myths mirrors this. They are owned – because they are seen to be locally devised and controlled, they are all the stronger for that. They are written – these myths are seen as learned and educationally valid because they represent

knowledge captured in language and policy. This category has a vertical relationship with governing myths and operational myths, being located between the two. This places them in arguably the strongest position within the typology in that they control entry to the field/community and dictate the operational possibilities of practitioners. They are also in a position, however, to effect some change upward on governing myths, which in time can change to represent the established reality 'on the ground', and captured in epistemological myths.

Epistemology as an area of concern is vast, and runs deeply in some shape throughout every field of research, given that it deals with the nature of the knowledge in that field, and the theoretical positioning that underpin it. It is difficult to make some over-arching comment regarding research on the epistemology of drama as education as it has been at the heart of many of the more energised debates within the fields of education and theatre, as well as the community of drama as education, yet these have rarely been explicitly addressed in 'epistemological' terms. This in itself is an indication of the existence of areas of myth. For Berry, '(t)he major functions of (critical) theories and practices are to interrogate, investigate, disrupt and intervene in the cultural constructions of modern life' (2000, p.2). Foremost amongst the cultural *status quo* Berry suggests as deserving interrogation, is the dominant epistemology. The structures it represents particularly include those that are 'invisible', 'that silence or stereotype', and those 'that privilege or value one knowledge paradigm over another' (*ibid*). This is particularly pertinent given the Irish situation, where recent studies by Sugrue (2004), O'Sullivan (2005) and Trant (2007) clearly signpost the need for more research into a variety of critical epistemological

questions, primarily because of the unquestioned nature of much of the Irish education system. O'Sullivan, in particular, frequently reminds the reader of Foucault's power/knowledge construction, with his assertion that 'knowledge, what it is and how it is structured and named both confers and assumes power, while power creates and benefits from the configuration of knowledge' (2005, p.98).

Critical studies in drama as education that specifically foreground explicit epistemological concerns are becoming more numerous. Anderson (2004) looks at the nature of knowledge acquisition in drama as education from a psychological perspective, specifically interrogating the idea of situated learning. Neelands (2004) attempt to problematise the manner in which assumptions about drama are presented as knowledge have been explored elsewhere. Gallagher's innovative work (2007) interrogates urban cultures and schools across two countries and explores the potential of drama classes and spaces in creating knowledge. A trend of research discourse in drama as education that may be regarded as epistemological in nature is only now beginning to emerge.

### **Questions of Form and Performance**

Much of the turbulence generated by performance and performance scholarship, which has proved productive and frustrating by turns, stems from the divisions created by the diverse institutional sites of research in the field. ... The dialectics that they produce include theory versus practice, history versus theory, dramatic text versus stage performance, performance (as a high culture form like most performance art) versus theatre (as a popular form like circus), and theatre (as a high culture form like the production of classic plays) versus performance (as popular culture, including rituals and social dramas). (Reinelt & Roach 2007, p.3)

In many senses, myths of form and performance are the most recognisable within the typology proposed here. Whereas in previous categories myths appeared quite covert and require some unearthing, questions and debates regarding form and performance have dominated the genesis and formative years of the community. The account in Chapter Four of Hornbrook's attempt at debunking what he felt to be the myths of drama in education, many of which concerned these very issues, charts the damage that division brought about. This section will not attempt to rehash the multifarious and complex positions of the past: it will instead attempt to complexify and layer the *bricolage*, and focus on identifying the difficulties associated with the position represented in the PoET. The fundamental claim here is that the PoET indicates the existence of a range of unquestioned assumptions and beliefs regarding dramatic form, particular the manner in which performance is conceptualised.

There are myriad references throughout the curricular documents to assumed understandings of drama and theatre:

The essence of drama is the making of story through enactment. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.2)

(E)ducational drama is not to be confused with what may be termed 'performance drama'. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.2)

We meet drama most frequently in the theatre, on television or in the cinema, and we associate it with performance, costumes, setting and stages ... This curriculum will not dwell on the display element of drama but will, rather, emphasise the benefits to be gained from the process of exploring life through the creation of plot, theme, fiction and make-believe. (Govt. of Ireland 1999a, p.5)

Being involved in such a (performance) experience, can, if undertaken with a knowledge of the principles and practice outlined in this curriculum, benefit children in fostering self-confidence, in giving them the opportunity to appear on stage and in allowing them to express themselves publicly. However, in undertaking such a project the teacher

should bear in mind that circumstances often tend to cause the overvaluing of product and the undervaluing of process. (*ibid.*)

To consider drama merely as a methodology is to risk diminishing both the drama process and the learning experience it can uniquely afford. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.17)

This drama text is not ‘presented’ to any external audience, nor does the learning gained from it depend on its being presented. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.37)

The making of plot (a series of incidents) and theme (a focus of reflection on essence and pattern) has, from myth to fairy-tale to Shakespeare to soap opera, always been regarded as a valid way of understanding reality. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.41)

Naturalistic drama is the genre that imitates most accurately the details of life. It is the genre that will come most easily to children. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.60)

This myth, given it is epistemological in nature, directly impinges upon the understanding of dramatic form that drives drama as education at primary level in Ireland. The understanding of theatrical form and performance propounded is somewhat confused and less than comprehensive. There are two distinct facets to it: (i) It appears to re-open an artificial dichotomy that dominated discourse in the field and community over the 1970’s and 1980’s: that of ‘process’ versus ‘product based’ drama. In denying the centrality and relevance of performance, the PoET appears to reject what is agreed to be a central element of the dramatic form; (ii) There is also an issue around a lack of clarity regarding the elements of drama, particularly dramatic genre. Both of these will be dealt with in turn.

### *Process v Product*

The distinction between ‘process’ and ‘product’ created false trails in thinking about drama teaching. The assumption that a performance in theatre to an audience constituted a ‘product’ and that improvised work in a drama studio amounted to a ‘process’ does not stand up to scrutiny (Fleming 2001, p.115).

In examining the discourse of the field and community over the last twenty years, there seems to exist some broad accord with Fleming's perspective. Even in the years which saw a surge in support for DiE, Heathcote (cf. Johnston & O'Neill, 1984) never attempted to dichotomise what she saw as integral parts of the same entity, despite making a persuasive and influential case for drama in classrooms. Indeed Bolton's most substantive volume (1998) is an attempt to reunite the sides through an examination of the concept of acting. Jackson (2007) provides a detailed insight into the extent to which the ideas of education and theatre are intertwined and fundamentally inseparable in his exploration of what he terms the educative theatre in action.

The question therefore, is how document premised on a fundamentally dichotomous rationale such as that which exists in the PoET, emanated from the Irish system. This is in spite of the overriding contemporary refutation of such a dichotomy in the discourse of the community, and the centrality of performance to both the oral, communal and private, literary aesthetic traditions of drama in Ireland.

In order to address this, consideration must be given to three factors. Two have already been discussed previously under the heading of traditional myths – the myth of universalism that pervades much discourse in drama as education, and the confused understanding of learning in and through drama that the curriculum offers. The third is much more difficult to concretely identify: the specific cultural and educational context in Ireland within which the curriculum was



developed. Research in this regard is scant, but two observations stand out. The drama curriculum is at odds with the rest of the primary curriculum documents; not only because of its structure<sup>xxvi</sup>, and its educational perspective<sup>xxvii</sup>, but also, and as noted by Sugrue (2004), the manner in which it was designed. Secondly, the drama curriculum is out of step not only with the discourse and thinking of the community, but also with the social and cultural context within which it is located because of the definition of process drama that it relies upon. This assertion will now be explored.

Without revisiting ground already covered, it has been clearly established that Ireland is in the midst of a period of radical cultural, societal and educational upheaval.

This is clearly visible in contemporary texts. Ferriter's already seminal socio-historical volume captures a flavour of that rate and scale of that change best (2004, pp.623-759). Within a cultural situation of seismic change, the firm adoption of a highly ideological and political perspective such as process drama is indication of an extant mythology.

The term 'process drama' first emerged from the work of O'Toole (1992), but it is most identified with the Irishwoman<sup>xxviii</sup> Cecily O'Neill. O'Neill (1995a)

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<sup>xxvi</sup> The drama curriculum contains only one strand – 'Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas leading to understanding'. Each of the other ten curricula contains a minimum of three strands.

<sup>xxvii</sup> As mentioned previously, the introductory document for the full curriculum maps fourteen principles of learning in the classroom (Govt. of Ireland 1999c, pp.14-17) which the other curricular areas consistently cross-reference. No mention is made anywhere in the drama documents as to how they are being linked with or achieved.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Anglo-Irish-American is probably a more designation accurate give that although born and raised in Ireland, O'Neill's working life has been spent entirely in the UK and the US.

suggests that process drama is almost synonymous with drama in education. She readily identifies the ‘limiting and tautologous’ (1995a, p.xv) nature of many of the labels in drama as education, and suggests that process drama as a term may be useful in moving the discourse forward, but concedes that it may not be the final answer. Her definition of process is directly oppositional to product, ‘a term that implies conclusion, completion, and a finished “object”’ (*ibid*), such as a theatre piece. O’Neill concedes that both terms are simplistic in attempting to deal with what she regards as intricate structures, and recognises the potential the term has in possibly perpetuating ‘the sterile separation of this improvised approach from its dramatic roots’ (1995a, p.xvi). This can be viewed as an entirely rhetorical piece of discourse, given that her book propounds a framework for a process drama, based entirely upon a successful differentiation between process and product. Continuing, O’Neill offers a set of clear characteristics for process drama. They consist of: drama as a learning encounter; exploratory dramatic activities; an ongoing event, built upon and continued over a period of time; a complex series of linked dramatic episodes; work which is not for an outside audience; and drama which is not text based, and essentially improvised (1995a). Despite this clear differentiation in form to what is (by her own admission) regarded as performance drama, O’Neill continues to argue that no division exists, and that process drama is increasingly being recognised ‘as a radical and coherent theatrical experience’ (1995a, p.xvii).

At the heart of O’Neill’s conflicting discourse, and despite her protestations otherwise, lies a fundamental misunderstanding as to the breadth of drama as education. O’Neill is not simply presenting process drama as a methodological

variant which might contribute to the work of the field and community, but is instead propounding a new and 'unrivalled' understanding of drama as education which can be equally utilised in the rehearsal hall with professional actors or in any learning situation, formal or informal, involving children. The argument can be made that in doing this she is simply promoting her own model with a view to attracting cultural capital in order to improve her positioning in the field.

However one views it, it is clear that in choosing to continue the tradition of rhetoric so evident in the discourse of drama in education, O'Neill neglects to situate her theory of process drama within a complex community/field situation which is rapidly changing and constantly in flux.

It must be acknowledged that there are other aspects of O'Neill's work which do indicate a concern with a broader understanding of drama as education, if not in theory then in practice. Taylor & Warner note that 'O'Neill's concern with dramatic form is central to her artistic pedagogy' (2006, p.29), and that she 'advocates a qualitative approach in education where her aims can change, based on contextual circumstances' (2006, p.75). They laud her willingness in advocating drama widely, and her abilities in helping teachers develop a broad and deep dramatic vocabulary. However, they acknowledge some of the criticisms of process drama including the fact that it can reinforce some heteronormative assumptions:

Although it has not been the focus of this book to critique process drama praxis, leaders need to be conscious that how they set up work may reinforce, even unintentionally, particular worldviews. O'Neill does not see herself as a political operative in the classroom, questioning dominant ideologies, but we have seen that she is committed to the power of drama to achieve a humanising curriculum where all have a place to stand. Nonetheless, a critical theorist might anticipate a more active commentary on who wields the power at any particular time and how

political hierarchies in schools impact on human development. (Taylor & Warner 2006, p.153)

This comment is clearly intended at the micro level of classroom praxis, but it pertains at the macro level of curriculum development also. At the heart of O'Neill's endeavour lies a fundamental conflict between on the one hand the advocacy of a pluralist vision for drama as education, and on the other, promotion of the idea of process drama.

O'Neill's standing as the leading (sole) Irish figure in the international community of drama as education is obvious from her work carried out in Ireland (1988, 1994, 1995b), much of which was directly addressed at advocating the design and implementation of curricular drama. The influence of her human agency is clear in this, in that as a result of her standing, O'Neill was in the most dominant position to influence the development of the curriculum<sup>xxix</sup>. The implications of the reductionist approach contained in her work are clear to see in the PoET under consideration here. In the curriculum, O'Neill's understanding of process drama (modified by John McArdle - the educational drama consultant) is imposed. Critically, this is done without the benefit of the broader vision for process drama espoused by O'Neill in her work and this results in an outright denial of performance as core to the dramatic process.

Some sense of explanation for McArdle's modifications to O'Neill's theory of process drama is garnered on close reading of his 1998 pamphlet for the Abbey

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<sup>xxix</sup> Whether this political influence was overtly exerted by O'Neill, or was merely 'latently' accepted on the part of the curriculum consultant and design team is in the realm of speculation, and clearly beyond the remit of this thesis. Regardless, O'Neill's voice quantitatively dominated the discourse of Irish drama as education for the decade preceding publication of the curriculum.

Theatre. Interestingly these modifications are not so apparent from the presentation of his theory of drama and theatre in education, but more from his analysis of what maligns contemporary drama education:

The theorists of the eighties and nineties, in seeking after a rationale for drama for learning, have had to, as the devil's price for a new way of looking at things, jettison some early thinking which seemed, in the context of exploring learning possibilities, unimportant. (McArdle, J. 1998, p.7)

The tone of McArdle's theory is clear from this – rolling back some of the superfluous developments of recent years in search of what was lost along the way is at the heart of it. The areas of contemporary difficulty McArdle touches upon include, *inter alia*: the fact that much drama practice is quite banal and clichéd; that role has been emphasised at the expense of character, something which has also brought drama further from the art-form of theatre; that the control of classes has become more teacher-centred; that the spontaneous is rarely seen; and finally that with the loss of character has occurred the loss of emotion and play has been lost. Most illuminating is how McArdle proposes to proceed in his process of reconceptualising drama as education. The first step is to restore for active consideration all the elements listed above. Next a definitive re-establishment is required of the relationship between the concepts of drama and theatre, something which McArdle feels to have become discredited, with the concept of process drama in practice having become, 'a hold-all for both drama, educational and theatre practices without any clear distinction between good and bad practice in either or any attempt to discern the distinguishing features of each' (1998, p.10). McArdle casts the relationship between drama and theatre as analogous to that of process and performance, but insists that the strengths of both lie in their difference, and that intellectual/academic separation

of both is a necessity. The clear inference is that the physical and educational separation of both is a necessity also, and what McArdle in essence proposes could best be described as a hierarchical approach which involves a developmental continuum running, from child play to process drama, from process drama to process theatre<sup>xxx</sup>, and from process theatre to theatre. The unwritten suggestion is that one may/should only proceed to the next form when a level of proficiency has been achieved at the current stage.

This perspective is reinforced on re-examination of some of O'Neill's writings. In her 1993 keynote to the National Association of Youth Drama (NAYD) conference on drama in education, she suggests that 'if we include drama in our curriculum at primary level as method and at secondary level as subject, we are in a powerful position to promote the ability of our students to seize upon a range of meanings' (1994, pp. 4-5). No rationale is delivered to defend this assertion, but it is wrapped in the language of action as well as the anti-establishment rhetoric characteristic of so many of the myths in drama as education:

In drama we have many disadvantages, but we are lucky to be in a position to make the materials of the curriculum grounds for action, for active participation, and not merely for acquiescence, for passive consumption. Perhaps this is one reason why we seem to be so unpopular with the administrators. (1994, p.5)

The particular stance of the PoET regarding process drama now begins to become clear. The form of process drama prescribed in the documents is process as an opposition to performance, based upon the belief that performance is at the pinnacle of learning in drama and theatre. This is problematic on a number of

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<sup>xxx</sup> Process Theatre is where children engage with scripts using the tenets of process drama and not with a specific focus on performing the text for an outside audience. (McArdle 1998, pp.27-28)

levels. First amongst these is the presumption that primary-aged children<sup>xxx</sup> are not good at, derive no educational or artistic benefit from, or do not enjoy performance drama.

Second is an obvious academic argument, but a valid and pertinent one nonetheless. It can be claimed that the process drama described in the curriculum is theoretically as valid as a form of performance and theatre with an audience (albeit representational theatre with the participants acting as audience as well as actors) as any other. This renders the differentiation between process and product, and McArdle's implied continuum of dramatic ability entirely invalid.

Thirdly, and more pressingly, is the fact that the Irish educational context into which the curriculum was then to be introduced had virtually no existing tradition of process drama (or DiE), but had a strong tradition of performance drama in schools<sup>xxx</sup>. In political terms, what was being demanded of the new curriculum was to enter an educational field with an underdeveloped and difficult to grasp rationale; to not acknowledge any existing practice, which regardless of educational or artistic efficacy, had been a strong feature of the educational setting for decades; and to supplant that tradition in favour of a way of working which few generalist teachers may ever have experienced and fewer still had training in.

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<sup>xxx</sup> Primary schools in the Republic of Ireland typically deal with children between the ages of 4-12 years.

<sup>xxx</sup> Much of this performative tradition is linked with religious (e.g. Nativity plays, Easter pageants) and community celebrations.

Fourthly, the concept of process drama propounded in the PoET offers no viable link for the primary curriculum with either strand of Ireland's dramatic heritage. Regardless of which one, both the oral, communal and private, literary traditions draw heavily upon performance not only for entertainment and spectacle but also for public sharing, mourning, celebrating, protesting and satirising. To explicitly deny performance as a part of dramatic form is essentially to deny children an important facet of their dramatic heritage.

Fifthly, the concept of process drama as presented in the PoET presents the reader and user with practical difficulties. As noted previously, the drama curriculum contains three strand units<sup>xxxiii</sup> around which the curriculum objectives are built. Leaving aside the tautology of doubly recognising both making, and then some of the particular skills involved in making, the absence of performance as a core strand unit is highly problematic. This situation is at odds with many other school systems around the world, something which is noted by O'Neill (1995b, pp. 3-4), where she outlines the elements the British, American and Australian systems, each of which acknowledge performing/presenting as a fundamental element, generally alongside making and responding. This scenario presents difficulties in two regards. Firstly the majority of resources available for Irish drama teachers emanate from abroad, thus potentially leading to confusion surrounding the place of performance/presenting/showing as a facet of classroom work. Secondly, in terms of the planning and execution of lessons, the curriculum requires teachers to teach children to reflect on the drama that they make. This obviously necessitates the children performing/showing/presenting

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<sup>xxxiii</sup> The strand units are: (i) Exploring and making drama; (ii) Responding to drama; (iii) Cooperating and communicating in making drama.



their work in small groups in order that the rest of the class can witness (audience) it. The point here is that there is an obvious mismatch between the language of the curriculum and what is required of teachers – a disparity of discourse cannot be easily bridged, regardless of how much or little credibility the curriculum actually holds.

Finally, a brief note on what has transpired since the introduction of the curriculum. Some recently published Irish texts virtually ignore the curriculum's stance on performance and acknowledge it as a key element of primary drama practice. Murphy and O'Keeffe (2006) explicitly address working with scripts and the potential they have for performance. They also include a chapter on the possibilities that theatre has in the lives of children. McCabe goes somewhat further, and includes an explanatory note at the beginning of her book mediating and qualifying the understanding of performance put forward in the curriculum, and explaining that if children have ownership of a piece and develop the piece in tandem with the teacher, that they 'are usually more engaged with this kind of performance, as the words and ideas are their own and they have a better understanding of the story (2007, pp.10-11). Parkes and Fitzgibbon<sup>xxxiv</sup> (2007) make least reference to performance, and adhere most closely to the principles of the curriculum though display strong performative aspects to their praxis.

This somewhat detailed discussion of the variant of process drama presented in the PoET may seem over-indulgent in the context of the brief snapshots of mythologies presented in this work. Nevertheless, it is essential because the

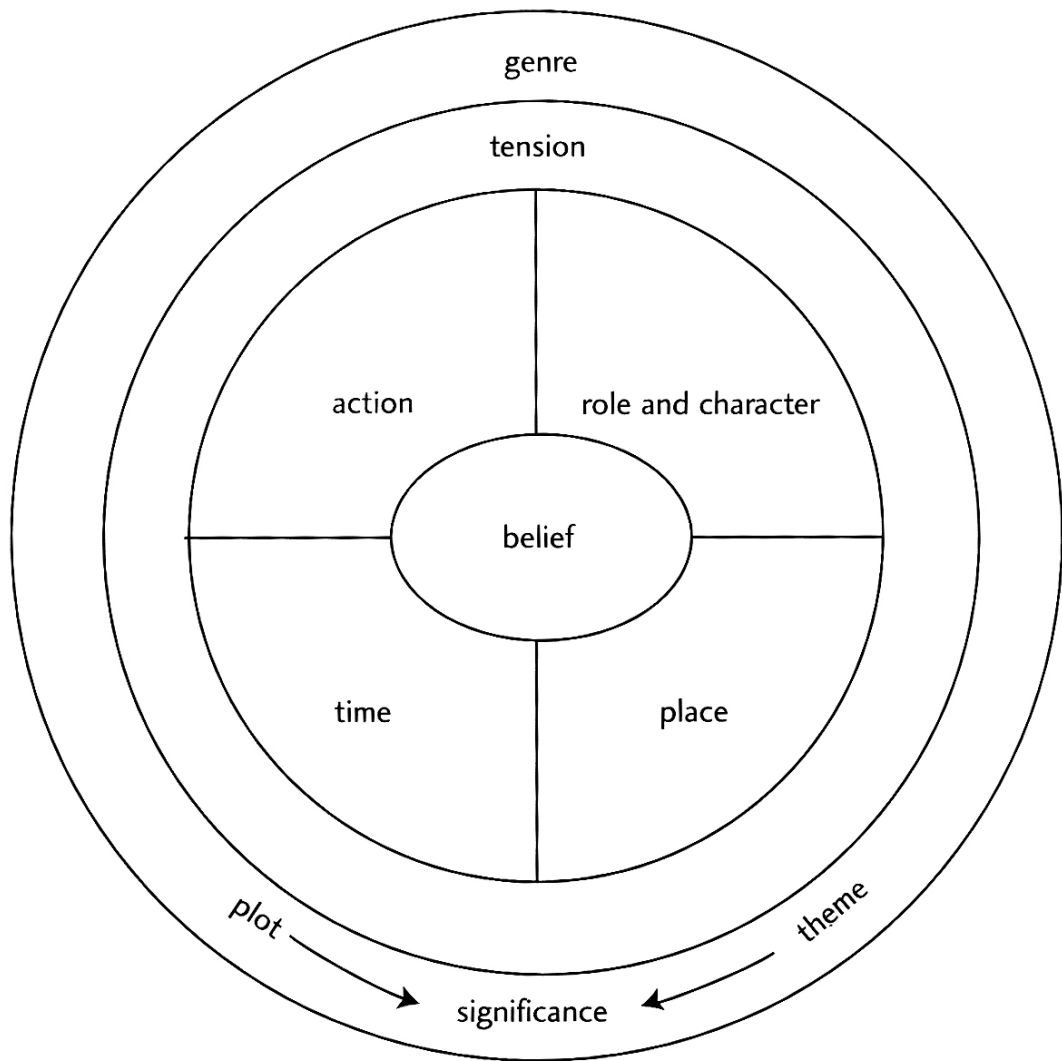
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<sup>xxxiv</sup> This is particularly interesting given that their book is published by the National Association for Youth Drama (NAYD).

process versus product dichotomy in this myth of form and performance encapsulates neatly the convergence of power, ideology and language in this mythic model. What can be discerned from the preceding discussion is that the design of the curriculum is undoubtedly ideological in nature, representing a distinct set of values on the part of both the state, but also to a greater extent the design team and particularly the Educational Consultant charged with the design of the documents. It is also obvious that the genesis and birth of the PoET was an inherently political process, where those with the most cultural capital within the community of drama as education in Ireland clearly shaped the philosophical orientation and design of the curriculum. Finally, the importance and centrality of language was brought to the fore in several instances in this debate. There is a mismatch between the discourse of the PoET and that of the community of drama as education, the broader field of primary education in Ireland, and the discourse of the remainder of the curricular documents. Cumulatively, this triumvirate of indicators mark the depth and complexity of this myth.

#### *Understanding of Dramatic Form (The Elements of Drama)*

There is a second strand of this myth that demands brief discussion: the confused understanding of dramatic form presented in the PoET in terms of the elements of drama. The elements are delineated as: belief, role and character, action, time, place, tension, significance (plot and theme) and genre. These elements are described as the 'defining characteristics' (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.46) of drama, and they relate to each other as described in Fig 7.1.



**Fig 7.1 The Elements of Drama**  
(reproduced from Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.47)

The definitions presented in the PoET for each of these elements form part of this epistemological myth, but it is the definition for genre makes the myth most accessible:

Naturalistic drama is the genre that imitates most accurately the details of life. It is the genre that will come most easily to children. This is very evident in the propensity that young children have for make-believe play. In make-believe play they create a symbolic reality through which they can explore the real world and come to terms with its strangeness, while

remaining in the safety of their own fictional world. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.60)

This definition reinforces the critique offered previously in demythologising a number of areas, notably the understanding the curriculum offers in terms of how children learn in drama as education (focus on make-believe play) and the universalistic understanding of drama as education (living through) focussed on a westernised naturalistic/realistic representational theatre. Delving further, the manner in which genre in process drama is understood is centred entirely on naturalism, but also acknowledges the potential of tragedy, fantasy and comedy. Absurd drama is also mentioned briefly, but it is never built upon. This poses some difficulties. Comedy, tragedy, fantasy, etc. are foundational aspects of genre with origins in the theatre of ancient Greece, and transcend different kinds of epoch-related ideas of genre such as naturalism/realism. For example, it is quite viable to have a naturalistic tragedy. It makes no sense therefore to portray them as equivalent. Alongside naturalism/realism, one might expect to find symbolism, Epic theatre, physical theatre, melodrama, etc.

This inconsistency is reflected on the choice of elements in the PoET. Their selection bears no correspondence to models from elsewhere within the field of drama/theatre, and again no supporting rationale is offered. O'Toole, writing from a drama as education perspective explores the elements of dramatic form and offers a more coherent alternative: the fictional context; roles and relationships; purpose and task; focus; tension; time; audience; location; the participant group; language and movement; mood, symbol and meaning; and a broad category he terms the performance elements of drama (1992, pp.13-47).

This brief aside simply serves to further illustrate the mismatch in language that exists in the PoET with regard to the epistemology of theatre specifically in ideas of form and performance. Reading the scale and scope of this myth is a challenge in itself. Remythologising it is a task of significant proportions.

### **Location of Drama as Education within the broader Field of Drama/Theatre**

This epistemological myth is accessible by looking to Williams' selective tradition (1961) and by examining not to what appears in the PoET, but instead by seeking what is missing. What is absent from the PoET is any reference to the way in which primary drama as education links to, or fits in with, the field of drama/theatre in Ireland. This claim is therefore allied to, but significantly different than the preceding area of myth in that it alludes to the central understanding of drama propounded in the PoET. The difference being that the myth in question here refers not to an aspect of that understanding, but instead to fundamental aspects of its site, location and origins. It is held in this thesis that this myth sees Irish primary drama as education not as part of an ongoing and evolving cultural tradition, but as a 'floating' educational concern, without context, predecessor or home. For that reason, this area of mythology is intimately tied in with the discussion in Chapter Three regarding field and community. The classification of this mythology as an epistemological one derives from these points, in that a knowledge of self is core to an enlightened concept of how self is constituted. Fundamentally, the mythology pertains to the official meaning ascribed or inferred as belonging to the word drama in the

PoET. The etymology of the word shows its origins in the Greek verb *drân* – meaning to do or to act. Attached to it are centuries of discourse surrounding the meaning of the word and the art. Any sense of that tradition and history of knowledge is entirely absent from the PoET.

The absence of any reference in the PoET to either historical aspects of the Irish dramatic tradition, or to current practice (in terms of ‘adult’ playwrights or companies, or in terms of work produced for<sup>xxxv</sup> and by children) indicates clearly the existence of this particular area of myth. This example of the selective tradition in operation extends as far as the recommended readings in the curriculum, which contain no works of Irish origin, either in terms of play texts or theoretical works. This in itself holds significance in terms of the discourse of the PoET.

Other contributions to the discourse of drama as education in Ireland do not necessarily share in the isolationist stance evident on the part of the PoET. The Benson report (1979) clearly contextualised the importance of the arts in both historical and contemporary Irish life. Given that this was an Arts Council publication, this perspective is perhaps not surprising. Agreement on the appropriateness of drama in education or process drama, for primary schools drama, is clear as early as the publication of the report of the Curriculum and Examinations Board (1985). It nevertheless recognises the importance of the performative tradition, as well as the importance of theatre in education work in the lives of children. Both green (1992) and white (1995) governmental papers

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<sup>xxxv</sup> This includes Theatre-in-Education, Educational Theatre, Children’s Theatre, Pantomime, etc.

on education share a broader understanding of drama/theatre as education than simply the DiE approach, and recognise the importance of the arts as an aspect of cultural development. This inclusive attitude is mirrored in the introductory section to arts education in the revised primary curriculum:

Arts education enables children to use a range of communicative expression through which they can explore their experience of, and interaction with, the world. It also affords them the opportunity to respond as viewers, listeners or readers to the expressive creativity of the artist, the composer, the writer and the performer. (Govt. of Ireland 1999c, p.52)

Yet this perspective is clearly denied in the drama documents. Both the primary music and visual arts curricula embrace and celebrate the position of their respective arts within an artistic field, and encourage children and teachers in participation and sharing of the shared endeavours of those fields.

Beyond the official documents, there is little of substance to add to the discourse. Scully's report (1998) is concerned with post-primary level but recommends a synthesis between what it terms educational drama and theatre studies approaches. More recently a report from the National Association of Principal and Deputy-Principals (2001), again at second-level, acknowledges the dearth of arts provision currently in schools, but again reinforces a vision of the arts firmly located within a cultural context. Potentially the most useful contribution to this debate just became available at the time of writing. In 2007, the Minister for Education and Science, and the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, through the Arts Council, jointly convened a committee to examine the arts and education. This committee duly invited submissions and compiled a report that sought to, 'advise the Arts Council on how best to align the Council's strategies for the

promotion and encouragement of the arts with the priorities of the formal educational system' (Arts Council 2008, p.8). Along with being charged with making specific and deliverable recommendations, the committee were required, amongst other things, to 'have regard to the wide range of demands on the school curriculum' (*ibid.*). The report opens with the Chair of the Arts Council giving an insightful account of the relationship between the arts and education in Ireland:

Arts provision for children and young people both in and out of school is arguably the single greatest fault line in our cultural provision. This is recognized by practitioners and public alike ...

In policy, provision and practice it is possible to trace through the 1980s and 1990s a developing distinction between arts education and arts-in-education. While these are two symbiotic areas, arts education refers usually to mainstream teaching and learning of the arts as part of general education, while arts-in-education refers mostly to interventions by the world of the arts into the education system, by means of artists of all disciplines visiting schools or by schools engaging with professional arts practice in the public domain.

Regrettably, and in spite of much good practice, the scale of need is such (there are over 800,000 school-going citizens in Ireland) that we are still at a stage where such work, while allowed to happen, is not really *provided* for. That remains a serious challenge to the twin principles of educational equality and cultural entitlement. (Arts Council 2008, pp. 3-4)

The report deals with the arts and education in general terms, and throughout is clearly walking a political tightrope between two governmental departments and a range of further agencies. It makes a policy and practical recommendations, including one suggesting a new national arts-in-education unit that would act as an intermediary and link between all arts and education agencies. The extended quotation above is salient in the context of this work for three particular reasons. It identifies the arts as being of importance in the lives of children for cultural and educational reasons; it identifies the neglect of the arts and education in



Ireland; and most importantly, it recognises a fundamental and institutional divide between the perspectives of the educational community and the arts community regarding their roles.

It goes without saying that this is a two-way relationship, and equally as important in establishing and maintaining the position of drama as education within the broader field of theatre, is the perspective of the relevant artistic institutions towards education work. Again, there is regrettably little available with which to further complexify this area of mythology. An arts-in-education directory (Arts Council 2007) charts twenty-one venues, five festivals and fifteen theatre/drama organisations that participate in education activities. Of the drama/theatre organisations, four are theatre in education or educational theatre companies, and seven are companies that specialise in theatre for adult audiences. Few have published materials regarding their education work. The most active player in this regard has unsurprisingly been the most heavily state-funded<sup>xxxvi</sup> institution, the Abbey Theatre (the National Theatre) who have an active education and outreach department. In their own sectors other groups are also very active including the Ark Cultural Centre for Children – a purpose-built arts centre for children in Dublin; Baboró International Festival for Children based in Galway; and Graffiti Educational Theatre Company based in Cork. However, the scale of the impact of the work being undertaken: the four major organisations listed above (three of which are entirely dedicated to working with

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<sup>xxxvi</sup> Traditionally, the Abbey Theatre (the National Theatre) was funded directly by the Department of An Taoiseach (Prime Minister). This funding arrangement changed in 2006 with responsibility for funding changing to the Arts Council in line with all other arts institutions. The Abbey Theatre receives a substantially greater level of financial support than any other theatrical organisation in Ireland. In 2007 the Abbey received a subsidy €8.5m. The nearest sum to that was the €1m subsidy received by the Gate Theatre in Dublin in 2007.

children) reached fewer than 30,000<sup>xxxvii</sup> children in 2007 from a school-going population of over 800,000. The most relevant statistic in all the above is possibly the fact that only seven Irish theatre companies organise education programmes or participate in educational work. This is quite a startling figure and clearly indicates that education is a low priority within the field. Given this, and leaving aside entirely the question of rates of adult participation in theatre, it is perhaps not surprising that a drama curriculum exists which voluntarily distances itself from the mainstream field of theatre in Ireland.

In summation, this epistemological myth is potentially problematic on a plethora of levels. It has resulted in the 1999 drama curriculum being established in a cultural vacuum, divorced from past or current Irish drama as education practice, removed from either of the extant Irish drama aesthetic traditions and the cultural institutions charged with the production of theatre. Describing drama in this manner illuminates an area of myth laden with ideological intent. The question also arises as to the role of human agency both on the part of those responsible for the curriculum, but also those in roles of power in the cultural institutions. The overriding sense is that it is easier for both parties to keep the other at arm's length.

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<sup>xxxvii</sup> 27,831 children from the primary and secondary sectors cumulatively in 2007 (Arts Council 2007).

**CHAPTER EIGHT**  
**OPERATIONAL MYTHS**

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The final category of mythology proposed within this typology is operational myths. Visually they reside at the bottom of the model, but this should in no way be taken to infer that they are less influential than other categories. Operational myths exist at quite a remove to governing myths: the latter represent the pinnacle of official doctrine, ideology and policy, whereas the former characterise the essence of reality, practicality and local knowledge. Operational myths may not have the ideological or linguistic persuasiveness of traditional and epistemological myths, but they are directly influenced both by them, and more importantly by the cultural and educational intermediaries (institutions), that embody all those other categories of mythic beliefs.

Their strength lies predominantly in language. Operational myths rarely exist in any other form other than what is perceived and agreed to be the 'right' and 'best' way of doing things. Occasionally they do not even exist at a formal level but are accepted within communities as the best way of carrying out a particular task, in this case teaching drama. For this reason they are not identifiable at first glance, but upon recognition become unmissable. This makes them even more difficult to demythologise as their camouflage gives them a sense of naturalness and a benign air. This in no way lessens their power. Operational myths represent unquestioned practice but not praxis; Friere's (1996) concept involves both action and reflection. For that reason, the relationship of operational myths to human agency at this level is inversely proportional. The actors/agents at the level of practice have little choice but to work within the constraints of the myths because of a range of systemic and cultural power structures. That is, because of their relatively low status as practitioners, they tend not to be the managers or

policy-makers. In essence, it is being argued here that teachers in Irish primary schools have little control over operational myths because of the nature of governance, tradition, knowledge and practice in their schools.

Having said that, practice is increasingly acknowledged as being of importance in the fields of theatre and education, and particularly so in the community of drama as education. Sophisticated applied research methodologies are being devised in order to capture the phenomena of practice in action, with a view to harnessing and understanding it so it may feed back into the ongoing cycle of reflection, thus leading to better planning and further practice. O'Toole charts how this new dawn in research came about and credits the phenomenon labelled by social anthropologist Clifford Geertz's as 'blurred genres', with destabilising old biases:

Together they (we) have ganged up on the positivists' assumptions in orthodox research about the permanence of knowledge, and the authority of its authors. ... By the end of the century large chinks were even appearing in the hegemony of science and scientific-friendly funding structures for research. ... For example, there was and is a growing emphasis on teachers who are reflective practitioners. Drama teachers naturally reflect upon their practice perhaps more than most: the shared and negotiated components of drama group-work, whether in schools or in community groups, demand constant, ongoing re-thinking. (O'Toole 2006, p.xvii)

Although the claim that drama teachers naturally reflect upon their practice could in itself be regarded as mythic, the trend O'Toole refers to can be seen in a broad range of recent publications, e.g. Grady (2000), Ackroyd (2006), Carroll et al (2006), Gallagher (2001, 2007).

The difficulties associated with making sense of practice are numerous.

Britzman's (2003) authoritative volume on teacher education speaks of the need of teachers to search for meaning, in the hope that with experience this meaning can be translated into insight. She warns, however, that the traditional assumption was that experience makes meaning; but counsels that the separation of these is important in order to look at what happens when experience does not deliver its promise of competence, clarity and confidence. Britzman identifies four further preconditions in understanding practice: that language makes experience; that learning to teach 'is both a problem of significance and an interpretive activity'; that in learning to teach, those that do so construct narratives of education, both their own and those of others; and finally that as there is no single story of learning to teach, much of the struggle experienced by those engaging in this process is as a result of 'a struggle for voice'. Within this struggle for voice she recommends that the learner explore biography, emotion and institutional structure (2003, pp. 19-20).

It is in this context of increasing recognition for the importance of practice, as well as granting of recognition to the voice of the practitioner that operational myths exist. The specific and rapidly-changing situation in Ireland is worth commenting upon briefly at this stage. O'Sullivan (2005) charts in detail the extent of contemporary change in Irish education, with the move from a theocentric to a predominantly mercantile educational paradigm.

The professional voices of Irish primary teachers are slowly beginning to emerge from a system that has generally recognised their quality, but rarely promoted

their voices in a highly controlled and hierarchal system. This perspective is substantiated by Trant (2007, pp.139-145), but most powerfully by Sugrue & Gleeson's (2004) work on the signposts and most interestingly, the silences that could and should dominate Irish education.

Models of practice in Irish primary drama as education have only begun to be recognised. Given that drama is a new curricular concern, and that primary teachers voices are only emergent, this is not surprising. A central part of demythologising (and therefore remythologising) this myth will be to ensure that models of practice become models of praxis. This raises a series of issues and subsequent questions. Is there enough strength in depth in drama practice to ensure this? Will discursive structures in Irish educational institutions allow for the foregrounding of teacher voices? At what point do political forces intervene to ensure the dominant paradigm is perpetuated, if drama is seen to be a threat or a usurper to the extant mercantile paradigmatic position? Will the positioning of the advocates for drama within a generalist teaching population, be strong enough in terms of cultural capital within the community of their schools and the field of education in general, to allow for strong voices to emerge and contribute significantly to the discourse of the various fields and communities?

The areas of myth under discussion here therefore relate specifically to the practice of teachers, mythologies that they may or may not unwittingly perpetuate and the search for the strong voices of teachers in drama as education that may held translate experience into meaning.

### **The Implementation and Acceptance of Drama in Irish Schools**

Ireland is now one of the richest countries in the world. In 2007, it is ranked as having the second highest GDP per capita in the European Union and the sixth highest in the world. Will it apply some of this resource to assist the aesthetic development, the creativity, the imagination, the innovation, the artistic expression of the human asset that is its young generations? Irish society is at a historical crossroads as regards the arts in education. What pathway will it pursue? (Coolahan 2008, p.44)

In identifying this area of mythology it is being asserted that there exists an intrinsic assumption on the part of the agencies that control curriculum that drama can, should and will be taught in Irish primary schools. The basis of the discussion to follow is that this is inherently mythic. Drama was imposed in the PoET with little by way of an extant tradition of drama as education in Irish primary schools, and as will be seen, with little support in terms of active advocacy and in-service training, or any increase in resources, funding or personnel. The curriculum was seemingly designed without any reference to the fact that the majority of Irish primary teachers have little or no training or experience in drama as education, and that many schools have severe physical resource issues. No acknowledgement is made of whatever current practice of drama in schools may exist. This tends to fall into two distinct categories: (i) performance-orientated drama which is produced for the consumption of the wider school community and which tends to be highly populist and popular within the community; (ii) peripatetic teachers of drama and speech and drama who work with children away from their class teachers, both within and outside of normal school time.



Some mention is made in the PoET of the proposed means of implementation of the drama curriculum. The section of text dealing with curriculum planning suggests five matters for consideration, namely: ‘ensuring that the importance of drama as a part of the curriculum is recognised and that the staff are committed to this’; ‘recognising the importance of the integrity of the drama as part of the learning experience’; ‘guaranteeing the continuity of drama in the child’s school experience’; ‘providing for the integration of drama with other areas of the curriculum’; and ‘allocating time for drama’ (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.16). Each of these areas is elaborated upon somewhat, but little indication is provided detailing concrete supports that can be put in place by the school or will be provided by the education authorities. In terms of staff development, the PoET notes that school staff must see drama, ‘not as a peripheral or ‘add-on’ activity’ (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.21), that they should consult and communicate with each other, and that they should avail of in-service education to enhance their skills in teaching drama. Furthermore, it is recommended that if a single teacher evinces a special interest in drama, they should be facilitated in further training by the Principal and school management authorities, in order that they might be a position to become a co-ordinator for drama in the school. Mention is made of the importance of allocation of time for drama in all classes, and also the allocation of general purpose spaces for drama purposes. Finally, the role of parents is addressed, with the recommendation being that parents should be aware of the implementation of the drama curriculum, primarily in order that they can help facilitate the children’s reflection on their drama work.

Although the curriculum was published and launched in 1999, implementation did not begin until the following year. Responsibility for that work was delegated from the design body, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to a new body specifically formed for that purpose – the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP). This group was established on a quasi-permanent basis but with a management and staff composed entirely of practicing primary teachers, who were seconded to the programme on a yearly basis. The eleven subject-areas of the curriculum were then implemented on a phased basis over the following six years, culminating with the introduction of drama (lastly) in the academic year 2006-2007. This introduction consisted not only of a formal commencement of recognition of drama as a curricular area<sup>xxxviii</sup>, but also three days in-service training for all primary teachers provided by a specialist drama team within the PCSP. Two of these were training days, facilitated off-site and involving the staffs of a number of schools, with a school planning day for drama sandwiched between them. The input of the training days was designed collaboratively by the national training team, and looked at drama games, contract, conventions, planning, improvisation, role and character, reflection, as well as drama and the Irish language. The planning day was facilitated on-site and involved the staff of that individual school only, working with a trainer to develop whole-school planning. Some follow-up advisory sessions took place in 2007-2008 with arts education facilitators visiting schools on request, to aid further development of planning in the arts, including drama. Participant reviews of each facet of the in-service training programme were carried out, but these were for internal PCSP use and the data never published.

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<sup>xxxviii</sup> In practical terms this meant that the Department of Education & Science Inspectorate would from that date require schools to provide school plans in drama, and require individual teachers to provide evidence in their notes and reports that they were teaching drama.

External reviews of some of the earlier subject areas to be introduced (English, Mathematics and Visual Arts) have been commissioned and carried out by the NCCA (2005), with some changes carried out to the design of the curriculum as a result. The second phase of review (Gaeilge, Science & Social, Personal & Health Education) is currently underway. Other research carried out on the implementation of the curriculum, particularly critically oriented studies, are scant but include, Palmer (2001), O'Callaghan (2003), Tormey & O'Shea (2003), Murphy (2004), Sugrue (2004), Waldron (2004) and Tormey (2006).

All the planning materials provided as part of the PCSP process are readily available, but beyond the factual detail noted above, they provide little information of relevance to this analysis. At this point in the implementation, the systemic requirement or status is quite clear: that drama should now be a fully activated and implemented part of curriculum in Irish primary schools. The question as to what the reality is is entirely in the realm of speculation and obviously beyond the remit of this work. What can be questioned however, are other factors that potentially impinge upon the implementation of the curriculum. These issues would have been known to the designers of the primary curriculum, and therefore form part of the context and background of the myth of implementation.

**Suitable spaces:** Primary schools are crowded places, and the Irish primary sector is acknowledged as being in need of sustained capital investment in school buildings. Irish primary class sizes are higher than the OECD average, with an

average class size of over 24 students<sup>xxxix</sup>. Whilst process drama by its nature can be modified to suit the environment in which it takes place, drama remains an active and often physical pursuit. A lack of adequate space is undoubtedly a barrier to implementation.

**Small schools & few teachers with expertise in drama:** Many Irish primary schools are small. Of the 3,160 primary schools in Ireland in 2006/2007, over 26% have three or fewer teachers.<sup>xl</sup> All Irish primary teachers (with the exception of SEN teachers) are employed as generalist classroom practitioners. This immediately reduces the likelihood of having a teacher on staff with an expertise or interest in drama. In addition to this is the fact that drama is not available as a major specialism within either concurrent or consecutive<sup>xli</sup> primary teacher education models in Ireland. Thus, those teachers who have an interest or expertise in drama as education are those who have studied abroad, those who have an undergraduate degree in drama/theatre, or those who have acquired experience and qualifications in drama in addition to their professional qualifications.

**Posts of responsibility & curriculum crowding:** Depending on the size of the primary school, a certain number of posts of responsibility exist for which teachers are paid a supplement. For example, an eight-teacher school has a

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<sup>xxxix</sup> [Online] <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/36/5/39290975.pdf> Accessed 3 July 2008.

<sup>xl</sup> [Online] <http://www.education.ie/home/home.jsp?maincat=17216&pcategory=17216&ecategory=17241&language=EN> Accessed 14 July 2008

<sup>xli</sup> The concurrent model of primary teacher education is a three or four year (depending on the University) Bachelor of Education award. The consecutive model is an eighteen-month Graduate Diploma in Education. All student teachers now undertake compulsory courses in drama but none can take it as a major specialism, i.e. as an elective subject studied to degree level. The ratio of teachers graduating in Ireland is currently (2008) approximately 3:1 concurrent to consecutive.

Principal, Deputy Principal, no Assistant Principal post and two special duties posts<sup>xlii</sup>. Given the evolving context of Irish primary education and the highly visible and public pressure that schools are under to develop fully functioning science, information and communication technologies (ICT), physical education (PE) and special educational needs (SEN) programmes, it is currently unlikely that schools would be willing or able to dedicate financial resources to drama in the form of a post of responsibility. The same point can be made with regard to a crowded timetable. Within the framework of the revised curriculum, virtually every hour in school is accounted for, with only two hours discretionary time per week (one hour in infant classes). Three hours (two hours thirty minutes in infant classes) is allocated for arts education within this framework, but given that visual arts and music are coming from a situation of long-established curricular and popular provision, it can be safely assumed that drama will certainly not dominate this time allocation. The more substantive point is that the time allocation for the revised curriculum does not take account of a specific time for ICT provision that some schools allocate, nor indeed time for peripatetic teachers or specialist coaches, nor time for more mundane, but no less essential aspects of classroom life such as assessment and standardised testing. All indicators again sign-post potential difficulties in the implementation of the drama curriculum.

**Further training and development:** It would seem at the time of writing that the in-service training and support provided for the implementation of the revised primary curriculum by the PCSP is coming to an end. Some planning support from advisory teachers remains in place, but there are no guarantees this will

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<sup>xlii</sup>[online]<http://www.into.ie/ROI/WorkingConditions/Promotion/ScheduleofPostsofResponsibility/filedownload,3867,en.pdf> Accessed 11 July 2008

continue. Beyond the PCSP programmes, there is no requirement of Irish primary teachers to engage in in-service training or any kind of professional development. Teachers who do undertake week-long in-service courses during their summer holidays, are rewarded with three concessionary days<sup>xliii</sup>, thus making them quite popular, even though they typically have to be paid for out of the teacher's own pocket. With the advent and increasing popularity of online courses (which receive the same recognition from the DES as on-site courses), including courses in drama, there is less incentive for teachers to undertake professional development work. In contrast to this, the phenomenon of teachers undertaking postgraduate work has seen an increase over the past decade<sup>xliv</sup>. No specialist taught postgraduate course exists in the Republic of Ireland in drama as education, and anecdotally, few students elect to research topics in drama for MA/PhD work or as minor dissertation topics in general MEd degree programmes.

The potential culmination of these trends could quite possibly have a resultant impact on the levels of expertise available in drama in Irish primary education. A lack of suitably qualified and experienced practitioners in the type of drama work demanded by the curriculum documents must militate against effective implementation.

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<sup>xliii</sup> Concessionary days are essentially days-in-lieu which the teacher can take at their own discretion over the course of the following school year. This gives individual teachers some flexibility to take days off, a situation which does not normally pertain.

<sup>xliv</sup> Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick has seen a year-on-year growth in postgraduate registrations in the Faculty of Education. A 97% increase is noted when registration figures for the years 2003/2004 and 2007/2008 are compared.

**School performances and specialist teachers:** As discussed in detail already, no mention is made in the PoET of performance, save that they can serve to foster self-confidence and allow children to express themselves publicly (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p. 2). Within this context, the long-standing cultural tradition of nativity plays, Easter pageants, school plays, end-of-year performances, etc. exist within a curricular vacuum. It must be assumed that they continue to exist. Equally, specialist drama, as well as speech & drama, teachers continue to service schools as they did before the existence of the primary drama programme. This impact of these considerations can be looked upon in two distinct ways: (i) that the existing provisions for drama will accentuate the efforts made within schools to implement the different understanding of drama demanded by the curriculum, and that collectively they will provide a comprehensive and broad provision for drama within some schools; or (ii) that the stakeholders in a given school setting will not understand the differing perspectives on drama offered by the ‘completing’ forces, and that the relative newcomer, i.e. the curricular provision, will be neglected. The reason for suggesting that it is the curriculum that will be neglected, is quite simply because of the fact that it is unlikely that the economic and communal popularity and imperatives commanded by specialist teachers and whole-school performances respectively, will be overridden by an educational demand which is vaguely presented and which is loosely overseen<sup>xlv</sup>.

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<sup>xlv</sup> Whole-school evaluations are carried out by teams of Department of Education and Science Inspectors on average once every six years in Irish primary schools. This is the only evaluation of the teaching of drama (and all other curricular areas) in schools. Whilst reports are published and made publicly available, their findings are only recommendations. It is the choice of the school (each primary school is locally managed by a Board of Management who retain ultimate control of the school), as to whether to implement the recommendations made by the Inspectorate.

Individually, these pragmatic difficulties are nothing more than that, and with willing human agency on the part of the school leadership and staff, they are readily surmountable. However, that is not the point being made here. What is being suggested is that all of the difficulties identified above were possible to anticipate, and indeed, impossible to miss, for the informed viewer in advance of, and during the preparation of a curriculum. That the PoET neglects to take appropriate cognisance of these difficulties and complications, and fails to propose suitable strategies and mechanisms to overcome them, represents a substantial effort at mythologising on the part of the documents, and their authors. That this is an operational myth makes the extent of this myth easily understood once recognised, but certainly not easily ameliorated. Practice continues unabated under the confines of this myth. The question is not about halting this practice, but more as to whether this practice can be given voice to, and from there considered as meaning and insight, with a view to demythologising issues surrounding implementation of the drama curriculum.

On an extremely practical level, this operational myth is the most problematic of all the areas of myth explored. Whilst the second myth to be explored in this category is relatively benign, this area of myth is placed in such a way that it can cause ongoing and serious damage to the long-term credibility and development of Irish drama as education. Bluntly put, this myth is the elephant in the corner. Most practitioners in the field and community acknowledge the difficulties in teaching drama, particularly on the part of newly qualified teachers. Amongst the many operational aspects this curriculum chooses to ignore is the fact that virtually no teachers have experience of drama. Yet, in a misplaced attempt at



equity, it treats drama as every other curricular area. This cannot be the case if there are not enough teachers who are qualified and expert enough in their chosen specialism to lead the subject in schools, give feedback to curriculum and inspection authorities, develop teaching resources and offer in-career development and training courses to other teachers. If teachers finding their voices is essential in order to make sense of their experiences in drama, who will be in a position to lead this search for voice in the Irish primary system?

### **Questions of Irishness and Identity**

The next area of mythology under consideration is no more difficult to recognise after a brief examination, but is substantially more difficult to describe and quantify. Identity as a concept and Irishness as a specific concept is contested terrain. Eagleton's tongue-in-cheek volume (1999), gives some sense of the complexity of attempting to decipher who, what and where might be regarded as Irish.

The classification of the myth of Irishness and identity as an operational myth within this typology is reflective of the direct and powerful impact this area of myth has on the day-to-day practice of teachers and practitioners within the community of drama as education. It also refers to the assumed and unquestioned nature of much practice surrounding issues of identity in drama. As with the previous discussion, much of this has not yet found voice amongst teachers, and much practice remains unquestioned at a critical level.

Of the critical studies referred to earlier on the 1999 curriculum, a number consider similar questions (Tormey & O'Shea 2003, Waldron 2004). The recent publication of national guidelines on intercultural education in the primary school (Govt. of Ireland 2005), add to the material depth of the PoET. This area of mythic archaeology will strive to uncover how the arguably shifting sands of identity, and particularly *nation*, *self* and *other* are understood in the discourse of the drama as education community. Given Ireland's prominent status as a postcolonial entity, much of the analysis will necessarily stray away from both the PoET and drama. It is salient that this is the last mythological area to be explored, and ideas happened upon here will have resonance with other mythical aspects of the PoET discussed previously.

The Points of Entry are numerous:

Irish education reflects the **historical and cultural roots of Irish society** and seeks to give children an appreciation of the continuity of the **Irish experience** and of their relationship with it. It acknowledges the child's right to understand and participate in the diverse cultural, social and artistic expression of that experience, and to appreciate and enjoy the richness of the **Irish heritage**. It reflects, too, **current Irish social and cultural concerns**, this enabling children to contribute to, and benefit from, the particular qualities and advantages of **modern Irish life and experience**. (Govt. of Ireland 1999c, p.26)

Much of what is finest in society is developed through a variety of art forms which contribute to **cultural ethos** and to a sense of well-being. (Govt. of Ireland 1999a, p.2)

We meet drama most frequently in the **theatre**, on **television** or in the **cinema**, and we associate it with performance, costumes, setting and stages. (Govt. of Ireland 1999a, p.5)

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances, the drama curriculum should enable the child to ...  
**- develop empathy with and understanding of others ...** (Govt. of Ireland 1999a, p.9)

The developmental and learning power of drama lies in the particular nature of the dramatic experience. In ...

- **'knowing and living'** the circumstance, dilemmas, choices and actions of a fictitious character, and their consequences. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.3)

Drama can make a unique contribution to the development of the child. Its purposes and the particular character of its activity, provide the means by which the child can achieve an enhanced awareness of self and can experience a unique mode of learning. It can ...

- help the child to assimilate and accommodate **the experience of other cultures**. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.4)

The endless possibilities of fiction allow for the exploration of **the unbounded range of human experience**. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p. 16)

The world of the imagination allows for the myriad of human possibilities that lie beyond the reach of everyday experience, even beyond the experience of a lifetime. Through it we can explore these possibilities, speculate about them and **extend our view of the world**. This depends, of course, on our acceptance of the validity of the truth that imagination offers, in the trust we have in its capacity to enrich human experience. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.48)

The key terms highlighted (author's emphasis) incorporate and represent meanings that although not hidden, are not manifest. As with other discussions, this section of the thesis will look firstly at constructing an archaeology of myths concerning ideas of *self*, *other* and *nation*. Some of the key questions that arise will be noted, but it is not the task of this work to identify specifically what values, beliefs or relationships are encapsulated in the answer to each question, but to critically examine the manner in which each is held as practice, and therefore the implications that holds for drama as education:

It is difficult and dangerous to make a single statement about Ireland, its inhabitants or its culture, since everywhere one looks there are signs of doubtness, not least in the lingering awareness that one language has taken over at the expense of another. (Roche 1994, p.279)

In looking at Irishness, one needs to initially look to Ireland. The Republic of Ireland is a relatively new entity having come about in 1949, and having being

preceded from 1921 by the Irish Free State, which gave independence to twenty six of the thirty two counties<sup>xlvi</sup>. Previous to that, from 1172, and most especially from the Act of Union of 1800, the entirety of the island of Ireland was under British rule. The period from 1800 onwards saw the island ruled directly from London through a Lord Lieutenant, without an Irish parliament. As alluded to in the quote from Roche above, this period of colonisation was not only political, economic, and at times religious, but also linguistic, resulting in the suppression and ultimate death of the Irish language (Gaeilge) as the vernacular. From independence through the Irish civil war (1922-23), the Emergency<sup>xlvi</sup> (1939-1945) and turbulent developmental period of the fifties, sixties and seventies the notion of *Irishness* was an untroubled one. Quite simply, what it meant to be Irish was Roman Catholic, Gaelic<sup>xlvi</sup> and not British. This was a reductionist tendency on many levels, the most obvious being the fact there was prominent Protestant and Jewish communities, as well as an ethnic minority nomadic Traveller population. As Tormey and O'Shea suggest, 'one could argue that Ireland has long been in denial about the extent of diversity in Ireland' (2003, p.2).

The business of *Irishness* is now both popular and complex. What it means to be Irish and the changing nature of *Irishness* occupies the minds and pens of

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<sup>xlvi</sup> The six counties of the north-eastern corner of the island having remained in the Union and become Northern Ireland.

<sup>xlvi</sup> World War II was officially known as the Emergency in the Republic of Ireland, which remained neutral throughout.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Tormey and O'Shea (2003, p.2) suggest that the idea of Gaelic encompasses a special affinity, if not a proficiency in the Gaelic language, as well as other Gaelic pursuits such as Gaelic games, Irish dancing and traditional Irish music. It also suggests a particular attachment to the land.

newspaper columnists<sup>xlix</sup>, popular<sup>i</sup> and academic<sup>li</sup> writers, and has spawned a whole international field of study and research – Irish Studies. As a nation (contested and all as that term may be), and as noted by many of the authors cited above, the Republic of Ireland has gone through a century of tumultuous happenings and changes. Politically these range from events such as a guerilla war seeking independence from the British, to remaining neutral in the second world war, to dealing with decades of internal terrorism and division. On a socio-cultural level, Ireland has undergone a transformation from being a mono-cultural rural, peasant nation that exported the best of its young to the UK and US, to being the ‘Celtic Tiger’<sup>lii</sup> of Europe, increasingly dominated by the IT and economic sectors and with an ever-increasing immigrant population. In all of this, the pressing question for many is what now constitutes *Irishness*, and more saliently, what does it mean to be Irish both in the world and in Ireland, in the early years of the twenty-first century. Most strikingly perhaps, and appropriately for this project, this search for identity has often been played out in Irish theatre, (as is the function of good theatre), with some of the pressure points of the once fixed, but now constantly shifting Irish culture/identity being clearly illuminated:

The village is no longer the objective correlative for Ireland: the city is, or to be precise, between cities is. That space between. That’s not to say that people don’t live in the country any more, or that rural life isn’t “valuable”; it’s that culturally, it’s played out. It no longer signifies.

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<sup>xlix</sup> Kevin Myers, a highly regarded columnist, for many years wrote ‘An Irishman’s Diary’ in *The Irish Times*, one of the biggest selling Irish broadsheets, and regarded by many as the paper of record. The daily and more mundane conundrums of *Irishness* were regularly played out in the column, which regularly questioned perceived traditions and ‘sacred cows’ of Irish identity, and was frequently virulently anti-nationalist and revisionist in tone. The column habitually set the tone for national debate on the topic.

<sup>i</sup> See O’Toole (1997), Eagleton (1999).

<sup>li</sup> See Cronin (1996), Ferriter (2004), Kenny (2005).

<sup>lii</sup> This rather twee title was accredited to pop-economist and media favourite David McWilliams. It came about in an attempt to capture something of the unparalleled period of rapid economic growth and success experienced by the Republic of Ireland from the early 1990s to about 2008. It became an increasingly hackneyed phrase spawning derivatives such as Tiger cubs, etc.

Mythologically, it doesn't resonate any more. Despite the fact that the overwhelming movements and changes in Irish society in the last thirty years have been urban, global, technological; that in every other area, we divest ourselves of the past like the good little I.T. loving global capitalists we're becoming; culturally we persist in defining ourselves by the ethnic, the pastoral (and that qualified form, the tragic pastoral). Even if we do it in an iconoclastic way, the iconography remains powerfully the same: half door, pint bottle, sacred heart. (Hughes 2000, p.12)

As noted earlier, some more specific questions regarding Ireland and *Irishness* arise in this project. Foremost amongst these is whether a single or universal definition of *Irishness* is possible or desirable. If the conclusion is that it is not, the obvious ensuing issue is as to how it is therefore possible to have a national curriculum that intends to teach the 'Irish experience', or 'current Irish social and cultural concerns' which successfully encapsulates 'modern Irish life and experience'.

Essentially, the questions being asked deal with concepts of identity, which run to the heart of postcolonial studies. Hall (1996) chooses to posit an understanding of identity which he regards, not as essentialist, but as a strategic and positional one. What this means, is that for Hall, identities cannot be fixed, stabilised, unchanging or singular, but instead are increasingly fragmented and fractured, and often 'constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourse, practices and positions' (1996, p.4). He holds that identity needs to be read as being produced 'in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies' (*ibid*). Essentially the internal homogeneity implied by the term identity, what Hall refers to as the unity that identities proclaim, need to be disrupted and recognised as constructions.

Disrupting unity in the context of this work involves looking to understandings based in and taken from the PoET concerning ideas of *self*, *other* and *nation* – all fundamentally related to ideas of *Irishness*. The importance of disrupting these unities is manifest given that aspects of an entire stratum of the educational system are based upon them. It is proposed that a lack of clarity/definition in how identity is understood and defined, is equally as mythic as a delineated and clearly prescribed understanding would be. The reasons for this have much to do with: (a) the idea suggested in the quote beginning this section that the task of quantifying or representing *Irishness* or *Irish Culture* is inherently futile, and (b) the conservative, traditionalist and postcolonial nature of the Irish educational system which in the absence of a demand to understand ideas of *self*, *other* and *nation* in a particular manner, reverts to what are now inappropriate understandings.

By omission, and by lack of representation of the feasible understandings that may exist concerning *self*, *other* and *nation*, the PoET rules out a multiplicity of possibilities. As it is the dominant text in the discourse of Irish drama as education, this characterises a mythologising of quite a substantive nature. The documents invite users not to look critically upon their received beliefs, but simply to perpetuate them in their classrooms. This runs contrary to the espoused beliefs of a curriculum that focuses strongly on the process and practice of ‘living through’ in drama, and represents alarming double-standards:

Taking a role in drama ... involves entering into a fictional world and helping to determine what happens in that world in order to understand the patterns of human behaviour that underlie a particular event. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.49)

(Through reflection) they can examine and explore the ways in which drama has given them new insights into human attitudes and concerns and a greater understanding of people and life. (Govt. of Ireland 1999b, p.12)

The importance of deciphering this mythology cannot be overestimated, and the field of postcolonial studies is a fertile ground to begin exploration of these questions. Originating from the study of European colonialism of the former Commonwealth and third world countries of India, Africa and the Caribbean, postcolonialism has grown over the last decades to encompass both studies of the period of colonisation, as well as subsequent happenings in those countries. Originally focused on the study of literature, it has expanded greatly into ‘critical’ areas such as race, gender, discourse and identity. Geographically, the areas studied are as diverse as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland, and the writings of the field are dominated by Said, Bhabha, Spivak and Fanon amongst others, whilst the field still maintains a strong anglophone locus. But appropriately for the *bricolage* under construction here, ‘postcolonial theory is far from singular and coherent and (that) the *location* of the theorist (or the theorised) is of central importance’ (Castle 2001, p.xiv). The incoherent and differentiated nature of much postcolonial theory can be problematic, and the parameters are constantly undergoing redefinition. For Lloyd, the importance of working in a postcolonial frame in Irish terms is not in the application of a singular corpus of postcolonial theory, but in the development of postcolonial projects:

I will emphasize here the importance of postcolonial *projects* as opposed to postcolonial theory or ‘postcoloniality’. In doing so, I want to distinguish the notion of a multiplicity of archaeological projects connected by a common critique of dominant historiography from the



rather fantasmatic notion of a homogeneous and homogenizing 'postcolonial theory' against which, of late, so much antagonistic energy has been expended. (2001, pp.13-14)

This is a particularly useful focal perspective given the inherently utilitarian nature of the research methodology of this project. Flannery's work usefully summarises the importance of the relationship between postcolonial theory and *Irishness* in this thesis:

(T)he fractious nature of the Irish condition is the tradition of the colonized. Thus the effort of the post-colonial critic in Ireland is to theorize this sense of discontinuity and to achieve some sense of a national and localized narrative without resorting to exclusionary ends. It is neither the task nor the prerogative of the post-colonial critic to (re)-establish a monolithic discourse simply for the sake of ordaining a tradition or of locating a tendentious continuity. The discontinuity itself is the legitimate focus of theorization and interrogation: the fractured colonial self is the history that we must confront. (2004, p.30)

British rule ended in the twenty-six counties of Ireland in 1921, but the influence of that rule which lasted over seven centuries, allied with the fact that the UK is obviously Ireland's nearest neighbour, remains palpable. Several postcolonial analyses look at particular aspects of the long and deeply involved relationship, most notably Kieberd (1996) on literature, Cronin (1996) on language translation, Gibbons (1996) on history and racial discourse and Ferriter (2004) on history. Ireland was a peculiar colony; Kieberd describes it variously as a 'metropolitan colony' or 'colonial laboratory'. It was also probably the most troublesome, with rebellion virtually a constant. Several facets of the Irish situation stand out in particular for the postcolonial critic; the high level of mixing and inter-breeding between coloniser and colonised, both in Ireland and on the 'mainland'; the fact that Ireland was a white colony; the language question, particularly the process of anglicisation to subvert the language of the

native Irish, and the subsequent policy of deanglicisation post-independence; the religious question and the periodically active policy of proselytizing the Catholic Irish; and finally the education system.

Surprisingly perhaps, given that it was a vehicle for many of the active colonial policies including language and religion, postcolonial analysis of the education system has received relatively little attention. Prior to the establishment of a national system of education in Ireland in 1831, there was a system of ‘hedge-schools’ in place. As the name implies, these were largely informal and unstructured establishments, where a Master met with pupils sent to him by word of mouth, and imparted to them the oral literature, history and traditions of Ireland (in *Gaeilge*), along with a smattering of Latin or Greek depending on the expertise and experience of the Master. Seeing these schools as a hot-bed of nationalistic and linguistic tradition, and therefore independence, the British established a system of state-supported national primary schools under the control of a state board of Commissioners, where matters of content, and particularly language, could be controlled. Coolahan notes:

There had been a strong and well-recognised tradition of active interest in education evident among the general Irish population. In the context of post-Union politics the government felt that the schools could serve politicising and socialising goals, cultivating attitudes of political loyalty and cultural assimilation. ... Ireland, as a colony, could be used as an experimental milieu for social legislation which might not be tolerated in England where laissez-faire politico-economic policies were more rigid and doctrinaire. (Coolahan 1981, p.4)

Initially planned and set up as a non-denominational system, problems arose almost immediately with the Catholic, Established (Anglican) and particularly Presbyterian churches. It was recognised over time that non-denominationalism

was a futile aspiration, and by 1863 the Catholic hierarchy had prohibited members of their church from attendance at any of the twenty-eight model schools established by the Commissioners. With training colleges established by the Catholic church in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the system evolved from a *de facto* to a *de jure* denominational system, with individual schools established under the patronage of the local church. The system was experimental in true colonial fashion, with the needs of the colonised initially clearly subservient to the needs of the colonial power though they were forced to evolve somewhat with time. The Irish system was the first of its kind in the world, and despite radical post-independence altering of curriculum and philosophy, remains largely structurally intact to this day. Immediately therefore, when examining Irish education from a critical perspective, one is forced to consider that the site of PoET is clearly a colonial construction. The implications of this are important on several levels. The text being dealt with is obviously a postcolonial one emanating from a largely colonial system.

Bhabha (1990, 1994) and Wa Thiong'O (1993) in particular have both written extensively and provocatively on the importance of writer, location and place in postcolonial studies, with reference to Eastern and African writers respectively. To some extent this point is tied up in the discussion regarding *nation* but is worthy of a brief note in itself. The situation differs considerably however, for this project, given that (a) Ireland is a very 'different' postcolonial entity, given that it was a 'different' colony, and; (b) the fact that researcher is based in Ireland, but the research project is based at University in the former colonial power. That being said, this is far from a unique situation for those engaged in

forms of critique of matters Irish. Kieberd, in exploring the potential future for Irish Studies notes the evolution of the task of exploring *Irishness* that has taken place, and suggests that '(t)he task facing this generation is at once less heroic and more complex: to translate the *recent* past, the high splendours and subsequent disappointments of that renaissance, into the terms of a new century' (1996, p.641). The renaissance Kieberd refers to is what has occurred since Independence, particularly from the nineteen-sixties onwards. There is a hint of mild sarcasm in his reference to the high splendours of renaissance, given that much of the aimed-for Gaelic Revival, particularly regarding the language, ended in absolute failure. In the spirit of moving away from the mood of absolutism and revivalism that arguably characterised the earlier years of independence, Kieberd suggests the way forward is much more multifaceted:

If the notion of "Ireland" seemed to some to have become problematic, that was only because the seamless garment once wrapped like a green flag around Cathleen ní Houlihan had given way to a quilt of many patches and colours, all beautiful, all distinct, yet all connected too. No one element should subordinate or assimilate the others: Irish or English, rural or urban, Gaelic or Anglo, each has its part in the pattern. (Kieberd 1996, p.653)

The PoET and the community of drama as education are both facets of the recent past in need of translation.

Turning attention away from the location of the analysis to the substance to it, and returning to a dialogue begun in an earlier paragraph, some contemplation needs to take place on postcolonial understandings of *nation*, *self* and *other* given that it is proposed they are central to the concepts of identity within the operational myths propounded in the drama curriculum and accessed through the PoET. Bhabha, of all the postcolonial writers, has given most attention to the

concept of *nation*. Arguing that the concept of *nation* is inseparable from that of narrative, he aims to highlight an ambivalence that ‘haunts’ *nation*. Contrary to the definite certainty with which the origins of nations are often spoken of, particularly by historians in the modernist tradition, Bhabha suggests that ‘the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional social reality’ (1990, p.1). Developing this, he notes that the importance of *nation* as a system of cultural significance lies in the fact that it emphasises the instability of knowledge, representing as it does social life, as opposed to what he describes as the discipline of social polity. Bhabha warns against the temptation of restrictively reading *nation* as either an ideological apparatus of state power, or as ‘the incipient or emergent expression of the ‘national-popular’ sentiment preserved in a radical memory’, preferring the idea of looking at the ‘Janus-faced ambivalence of language’ (1990, p.3). The value of this antagonistic perspective for Bhabha lies in the fact that it ‘will establish the cultural boundaries of the nation’ (1990, p.4). This is necessary in order that these boundaries may be recognised as holding ‘thresholds of meaning that must be crossed, erased, and translated in the process of cultural production’ (1990, p.4). Bhabha’s redefinition of *nation* is important not for what it discounts in terms of identifying *nation*, for it discounts nothing. Its significance lies in the dissolution of fixedness long associated with the word, and the urge that *nation* can only be described not by looking to narrative, but by looking at the borderlines of the nation space where the people becomes what he describes as a ‘double narrative movement’ (1990, p.297). In lay terms, this is when discourse begins to recognise people as both the ‘objects’ of a nationalist pedagogy, and also the

‘subjects’ of a process of signification by which the everyday presence of the ‘nation-people’ creates a constantly repeating and reproducing idea of *nation*:

The scraps, patches, and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a national culture, while the very act of the narrative performance interpellates a growing circle of national subjects. In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of *writing the nation*. (Bhabha 1990, p.297)

Through this theoretically dense concept of foregrounding the margins and looking to the extremities, Bhabha holds that the redundant singularity of ‘homogenous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, or ‘organic’ ethnic communities’ (1994, p.5) can be entirely redefined. Thus the perils of cultural comparativism, so often detrimental and destructive, can be escaped from.

Lloyd propounds another understanding of the postcolonial project with regard to the standing of *nation* that has particular resonance in the context of this work:

Rather than fetishizing the narrative that turns around the flagpole, postcolonialism, along with the ‘subaltern’ histories that have so often informed it, is devoted to the archaeology of practices and formations that are not subsumed in or determined by the nationalist project of the capture of the state. The ‘post’ in postcolonial refers not to the passing of colonialism but to the vantage point of critiques which are aimed at freeing up the process of decolonisation from the inhibiting effects of a nationalism invested in the state form. Such critiques make way for the reconstitution of alternative narratives which emerge in the history of our present, with its multiple contemporaneous rhythms and intersections. (2001, p.17)

The implications of utilising such a relatively radical reconceptualisation of *nation* (and therefore identity) within a mythic *bricolage* become evident when Bhabha further describes the nationalist pedagogy ascribed in the understanding

of people as 'objects' of *nation*. He suggests that such pedagogy found its narrative authority in a tradition of people as a movement becoming designated as such by itself, 'encapsulated in a succession of historical moments that represents an eternity produced by self-generation' (1990, p.299). This process of self-generation results in the static and continued signification of the people of the nation as *self*. By its nature, this is a limiting and uninclusive concept. Disruption of the self-generation through Bhabha's notion of the performative (described in the quote above), results in the creation of a 'space of representation that threatens binary division with its difference' (1990, p.229). Immediately the horizons broaden, and that space is '*internally* marked by cultural difference and the heterogeneous histories of contenting people, antagonistic authorities, and tense cultural locations' (*ibid.*). *Nation* as *self* is fundamentally re-imagined and problematised, and moves away from being a fixed and self-generated narrative to a constant searching in the margins for identity. Tradition (through narrative) therefore becomes of minor importance to identity.

With this performative re-evaluation of *self* must come a renewed understanding of *other*. The relationship between the two is relatively straightforward; that which is not *self* must belong to *other*. The affiliation is not as straightforward as that binary implies. Bhabha suggests that the place of *other* 'must not be imaged ... as a fixed phenomenological point opposed to the *self*, that represents a culturally alien consciousness' (1994, p.51). Instead he argues that *other* must be seen as a concept that works toward the negation of what he regards as primordial identity on cultural or psychic levels. This level of primordial identity

allows culture to be represented as a 'linguistic, symbolic or historic reality' (1994, p.52). In its place, Bhabha suggests that the *other* is identified through its ambivalence – disclosing through its representation a lack. What this lack may be or how it is perceived seems to be open to question. The important point that is stressed, is that if the *other* represents such a significant force in the differentiation, through a process of the subject's signification in language, then the *other* cannot disappear:

It is a process of substitution and exchange that inscribes a normative, normalizing place for the subject; but that metaphoric access to identity is exactly the place of prohibition and repression, a conflict of authority. Identification, as it is spoken in the *desire of the Other*, is always a question of interpretation, for it is the elusive assignation of myself with a one-self, the elision of person and place. (Bhabha 1994, p.52)

Within this strongly postcolonial reading the seeker of identity is pushed constantly towards the margins, and away from age-old and self-generating traditions and narratives that describe *nation*. That relationship being disrupted, ideals of *self* no longer ably function and the reader of myth is forced to acknowledge the *other* in a valid attempt to realise identity. However, *other* is elusive. That is the point. Postcolonial readings demand a ready acknowledgement of the *other* for it is only in that attempt to find the *other* can the realisation reached that it is in identifying the *other* that the reader places themselves as *other*. This is the first step in ascribing identity.

And so to the application of identity, in this particular case Irishness. Wherein lies the application of these concepts, and what is the implication of their application for some of the recurrent concepts identified in the PoET which revolve around the pivot of identity, such as Irishness, heritage and tradition? A



range of ancillary questions spring forth with regard to the drama curriculum, particularly the sections of the PoET highlighted at the beginning:

1. What concept of Irishness is perpetuated through the drama curriculum? Is it implicit or explicit? Is it questioned?
2. Can an understanding of Irishness be derived from the PoET that moves beyond nation?
3. Is it necessary in a curriculum to so describe Irishness?
4. What are to be understood from the PoET as the 'historical and cultural roots of Irish society' and 'Irish heritage'?
5. What meaning can be attributed to the idea of 'cultural ethos'?
6. What understandings of Irish drama and the function of Irish drama are represented in the PoET?
7. What is meant by 'other cultures', and how does this understanding represent others?
8. What meaning is attributed to the human experience if it is claimed that the 'human experience' is truly 'unbounded'? How can an experience that is true to all humans be identified?
9. How is the world understood, if it is claimed that drama has the ability to 'extend our view of the world'?

The simple fact of the matter is that each of these nine questions could easily spawn nine more. Excavation of each would compromise a philosophical treatise in its own right, and it is neither within the remit nor desire of this project to begin such a task. It must suffice to describe the parameters of the archaeology and leave the task of remythologizing to others. That said, some discussion needs to take place as to the ability of Irish education, and the field of drama/theatre and particularly the community of drama as education to begin such a process. Some consideration needs to be given to the ramifications of this demythologising for issues of language, power and ideology.

The question will also be briefly asked as to whether drama as education in the form of process drama might have the inbuilt tools readily available to surmount the difficulties described regarding *identity*, *self* and *other*. It is undeniable that some in the community expect it to so have.

As indicated right at the beginning of this section, some consideration is beginning to be paid to question of identity and nation in Irish studies in particular, but also to a growing extent also in Irish education. Waldron's study of the revised primary curriculum, though much more general in perspective, has clear intersections with the questions posed here. Her study focuses in particular on concepts of Irishness as understood in the geography, history and social, personal and health education (SPHE) documents, drawing on comparative analysis with existing documents, with supplementary reference to broader educational texts. Her discussion of the history curriculum is particularly relevant. Noting that the 1971 primary curriculum in fact represented in fact a substantial move away from 'an uncritical acceptance of the national story' (2004, p.217), particularly in history, Waldron posits that this was largely felt in the shift in curricular emphasis from the national to the local. She suggests that the 1999 curriculum follows through with this and presents an ideal of identity that is remarkably devoid of sentiment, describing it as a 'relentlessly post-nationalist document' (2004, p.217), mainly because of the fact that it does not cite the words 'Ireland', 'Irish' or 'Country' in its aims. Whilst that certainly is the case, and it may represent a movement away from nationalism of the more vehement sort, it can be argued that it by no means guarantees a pluralistic

perspective of *other*. Waldron's overall assessment of the portrayal of Irish identity in the history documents is that:

(It recognises) the nested identities of multiple communities and characterised by openness and inclusiveness, it is outward looking and generous in its disposition. But is it Irish? ... (I)n avoiding the dangers of sentimental patriotism, it may have missed the opportunity to create a situated pedagogy. (2004, p.219)

In this she recognises a conundrum that can be argued pertains similarly to drama, but given the obvious epistemological differences, is of a different nature. Her overall assessment of the three areas she considers is that it is plausible to argue that together they provide 'a coherent and well-balanced blueprint for citizenship education in the twenty first century' (2004, p.224). Significantly, she concludes positively and purposefully that:

(t)he affirmation of diversity at the heart of the conception of Irish identity represents a significant ideological shift from one bounded by ideas of a common culture and a shared religious ethos to one which recognises the multiplicity of identities and the permeability of those boundaries. (2004, p.229)

Two pertinent comments need to be noted linking Waldron's study and the critique of the drama curriculum. Firstly, it is significant that Waldron chooses the concept of identity in curriculum as her research locus. Whilst the level of interrogation of that concept is on a functionally different basis to that contained here, and it is only a book chapter, it is indicative of a growing awareness within the Irish educational research community as to its importance. Other recent and significant volumes on Irish education, most notably O'Sullivan (2005), have failed to address the matter at all. Secondly, Waldron's conclusions are indicative of a disparity and inequality throughout the primary curriculum regarding the 'filling' of the concept of identity. Whilst she is not always in agreement with the

understanding portrayed or the overall balance, she certainly finds enough material to interrogate Irishness as portrayed in the documents without digging particularly deeply. This is in stark contrast with the unfilled and somewhat vacuous concepts of identity, particularly in the case of *self* and *other*, which drive the drama curriculum.

Building on the latter point, it is worth noting that other official documents provide some reassurance that at the very least serious consideration is being paid in Irish education to the problematic issue of identity. Tormey and O'Shea from the NCCA report on the process of constructing a set of guidelines that might guide Irish educators in the primary system towards a way of reconsidering Irishness, but warn that it is not 'a one straightforward one of replacing one set of images with another' (2003, p.3). They pay special attention to moving the concept of identity away from a definition they consider to have been dominated by ethnic nationalism, and interestingly cite clearly the constraints felt by the NCCA in tackling what they perceive as ambivalence in terms of introducing interculturalism as a real concept in schools. The guidelines themselves as published represent clear progress in terms of describing official policy as to how it sees the practice of interculturalism influencing education:

Intercultural education is a synthesis of the learning from multicultural and anti-racist education approaches that were commonly used internationally from the 1960s to the 1990s. ... (T)he term 'interculturalism' expresses a belief that we all become personally enriched by coming in contact with and experiencing other cultures, and that people of different cultures can and should be able to engage with each other and learn from each other. In Ireland, the approach to cultural diversity is one of interculturalism. (Govt. of Ireland 2005, p.3)

Whether to it is sufficient to pass off questions of identity solely on increasing awareness and embedding of intercultural perspectives is a question for another day. What is important to note again is that progress is being made<sup>liii</sup>. Yet again however, the richness, diversity and openness of identity striven for makes pointedly clear the lacunae evident in the drama texts. The case can be argued that the recent publication of the intercultural guidelines should serve to transcend that particularly difficultly, but if PoET is considered a ‘document’ in the Foucaultian sense, as it must be, then the divergence becomes even more glaring, for it represents not merely an omission or an oversight, but clearly a political effort to ideologically manipulate discourse.

Both Waldron’s critique and the Intercultural guidelines share a commonality that is of more than passing interest here, and signposts a further stage in the construction of this *archaeology*. Waldron notes the introduction of drama as ‘both a discrete subject and as a cross-curricular approach’, and suggests that in its ‘exploration of self, of community and interdependence, drama has the potential to contribute significantly to individual and group identity and relations’ (2004, p.235). The Intercultural guidelines suggest that:

The fictional lens that drama brings to bear can provide a safe space in which the child can develop a positive emotional engagement with and understanding of different people and their perspectives, and can explore the emotional impact of discrimination and inequality. (Govt. of Ireland 2005, p.85)

It can be posited that both these examples represent the clearest signification thusfar of an extant mythology in operation. As a result of its assumed nature,

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<sup>liii</sup> This is clear particularly in the case of the Traveller community referred to earlier. In the Intercultural Guidelines, they are referred to as a distinct ethnic grouping for the first time ever in an official government publication.

drama as education is believed to be automatically better-placed than many other educational areas to successfully interrogate identity. This utilitarian attitude and belief on the part of many educationalists almost excuses drama the need to ask questions of itself, and particularly about its ability to deal with issues as complex as identity. No reference to the power of drama to engage in the sorts of activities suggested, are to be found in the drama documents. This, and the veracity of the claims aside, what does need to be explored is the extent to which the drama as education community has considered some of the ideas above both in terms of dealing with identity in drama but also in dealing with identity through the use of drama.

Questions of identity have received some attention from the broader community of drama as education, but as with so many aspects of drama practice, they remain under-interrogated. Much of what drama claims to offer within education centres on understandings of the *other* with the aspiration of a better understanding of *self*. Certainly in the earlier years of drama practice, it is fair to say that questions of identity were perceived on a binary and oppositional basis. Heathcote, in her seminal 1980 'Signs and Portents' paper, explains the centrality of *other* in her drama work. She notes that '(e)verything else in the world except oneself is 'an other'' (Johnson & O'Neill 1984, p.164). This understanding of *other* encompasses not so much the subject of the dramatic exploration, but a description of the group (of children) with whom she is working:

By taking up a role one offers not only a point of view to the others, but places them in a position from where it is assumed that they will also find a point of view. Note that I have said assumed. One cannot endow people with commitment to a point of view, but often by placing them in the response position, they begin to hold a point of view, because they can see it has power. The crudest power to give others is that of disagreeing

with the role, spotting the weakness in the role's position or even opposing the role. (Johnston & O'Neill 1984, pp.164-165)

This account of practice (which is akin to the idea of living through discussed earlier) aptly illustrates some of the difficulties. Whilst Heathcote gives consideration to the *others* in her class, little thought is given to the *others* represented in the roles she is asking her *others* to take. That is, the dual system of otherness present in a single classroom is not dealt with. Bolton, considered the more theoretical of the two pioneers, wrote many significant articles that examined the manner in which drama worked as a means of learning, yet he never addressed the issue of identity in any noteworthy fashion. His understanding of the learning power of drama focuses more on what one might describe as the psychological nature of the interaction:

Dramatic activity does not supersede direct experience nor is it a second-best to direct experience. Its potency lies in 'metaxis', a heightened state of consciousness that holds two worlds in the mind at the same time. The fictitious world is not 'given', to be merely suffered. It is actively *construed*, so that submitting to its experience is tempered by the treatment of it as an *object*. Thus the psychology of dramatic behaviour is of a different order from direct experience and independent of any criteria to do with 'nearly real'; it is a form of experiencing that 'brackets off' an occurrence, permitting both submission and an enhanced degree of *detachment*. (Bolton 1984, p.142)

In reading these examples, it must be remembered that cultural and critical studies were in their infancy at the time of their writing. The influence of these writings on contemporary practice lingers strongly – both of the works cited from Heathcote and Bolton are included in the bibliography of the Irish drama curriculum.

More contemporaneous works have given significantly more consideration to the matter of constructions of *self* and *other*. O'Toole is perhaps the first in that regard. Without explicitly addressing questions of identity, he gives detailed consideration to the negotiation of meaning in drama, and notes the 'signification emerging from the **fictional context** is mediated and transformed through the **contexts of the medium** and **setting**, then further transformed within the participants' **real context**' (1992, p.217). O'Neill addresses the questions of identity and role, yet offers little further than to note that, 'we can learn both who we are and what we may be' (1995a, p.91). Neelands talks about 'acts of identity' (1998, p.37) and the manner in which students can explore their own emergent identities through acts of identification or non-identification they make in the drama. He also brings drama back to its ancient origins by placing ideas of *self* in drama alongside ideas of 'private and public lives', and 'citizenship' (1998, pp.38-39). Even in this selective lineage a growing consciousness within the discourse of the community with the problematic nature of identity can be ascertained.

This finds voice more explicitly in the applied studies of Ackroyd & Pilkington (1997a & 1997b), Greenwood (2001) and Garcia (2001). Grady's volume on drama and diversity critically questions the choices made by practitioners as drama work is constructed, and the implications those choices have for the work as learning, but also for the students involved in the learning. She comes to the conclusion that two things in particular are responsible for those choices:

(O)ur *ideological positions* (or what we think and believe) which are connected to, although not determined by, our complex *identity locations* (which include racial and ethnic background, social class position, gender, ability, sexual orientation, as well as other markers such as



religious and political affiliations). Both profoundly affect how we construct our work and the areas of learning we give students the opportunity to explore. (2000, p.xii)

These positions and locations are mirrored in the students themselves, and left unchallenged the resultant uncritical collision can, according to Grady, serve only to 'reinforce negative understandings of social processes' (2000, p.xii). Her work proceeds to focus on advocating what is described as an 'embodied' concept of difference in drama practice. This places the onus on the practitioner to critically examine and foreground their own constructed positionings and acknowledge them as such. The implications for this in the attempt to bring multicultural perspectives to bear in drama teaching are important. Instead of having difference as the context, content or focus of the drama work (as arguably was the case traditionally), it now becomes 'merely' a part of the practice, and therefore the construction of the lesson. This serves to immediately move the work away from universals. Grady reminds the reader that what is perceived as universal or natural by one participant, can be entirely alien to another, even if on a many levels, the participants seem to the teacher to share many universals. Key to the operation of this embodiment of difference, is a mapping of *self*. Whilst acknowledging that this is a somewhat fraught process in that subjective individual identity involves participants defining themselves by acceptance or rejection of socially constructed norms, Grady proposes a mechanism based on social group membership. Using the social identities of race, gender, class, ability/disability, sexual orientation, religion and age, readers are challenged to ascertain their membership and status within each grouping (2000, p.10).

Grady's attempt to give voice to the process of mapping *self* is without explicit reference to the definition of *other*. Its importance lies in the fact that it is driven out of consideration for the *other*; both the students in the classroom and the characters in the fictional world of the drama.

There is another uncertainty to be played with as part of this *bricolage*; that of questions of identity within the community of drama as education. Nicholson suggest that 'communities of identity' emerge when people recognise experiences and share understandings in the values and stories of others. She posits that strong communities of identity 'are built by those who feel that they share common struggles', but warns that they 'can also have the effect of disguising very real difference between people and missing the possibilities of multiple identities' (2005, p.94). That is, they are built on matters of sameness and difference. This categorisation has particular relevance in the discussion of the community of drama as education and issues of identity. It is undeniable that for many years the community was categorized by sameness and difference: those who favoured an emphasis on the practice of drama in education, and those that favoured an emphasis on the teaching of the dramatic arts. It could well be the case, though beyond the scope of this project that postcolonial perspectives are relevant in unravelling the construct of that communal identity.

#### *The role of drama as education in exploring identity*

In its exploration of self, of community and interdependence, drama has the potential to contribute significantly to individual and group identity and relations. Its participative and collaborative methodology and the opportunities it provides for children's voices to be heard have obvious implications for the practice of citizenship. (Waldron 2004, p.235)

A complicating element in the myth of Irishness and identity is that mentioned by Waldron above – the assumed ability of drama as education to deal appropriately with issues of identity because of its claim to allow children to experience the *other* through manipulation of dramatic form. This has been problematised not only in the lengthy discussion of *other* in the preceding pages, but also in the section of analysis dealing with the myth of universalism. It is worth noting, however, that some studies within the community of drama as education have begun to engage with this matter. Garcia (2001), Nelson (2005), Rivière (2005) and particularly Gallagher (2001, 2002, 2004, 2007) have all engaged at a critical level with drama's ability to promote learning about *identity*, *self* or the *other*. Gallagher's ground-breaking books (2001, 2007) have collectively done more to promote engagement with critical themes than any other works in the community. In dealing with the feminist tradition and urban schooling and their relationship with drama as education, Gallagher utilises a probing post-critical ethnography to startling effect. Despite that, or perhaps as a result, she remains steadfast in her belief of the ability of drama to successfully engage with the *other*:

Drama, by definition, is a social art, not a solitary experience. People make theatre for others to see, or in the case of classroom drama, it is often the self-spectatorship that makes for the important 'audience' experience. In drama, as in life, we are self- and other- constituted. (Gallagher 2007, pp.102-103)

The belief is that the process drama envisaged in the PoET is in fact well placed to deal with the reconceptualisation of *nation*, *self* and *other* as envisaged by Bhabha, Hall *et al.* But this can only take place in an operational space where such a looking to the liminal is possible. Given that the teacher has such centrality in any model of process drama, this one being no different, much

responsibility resides with the teacher and their understanding both of the function, purpose and place of process drama, and their openness to adopt a philosophical stance that allows a definition of *nation* and *self* that permits a true openness to *other*. The difficulty as demonstrated in several places in the PoET is that the concept of *other* is pushed and promoted so much without any clarity attached, that it leaves it very muddled as an aspiration. Dealing with *other* in terms of what it means to be a Muslim member of Irish society negates any particular gain made through the process of that exploration. The simple reason for this being, that the relatively small Muslim community most certainly exist on the periphery of Irish public life, yet as people in the margins, they are central to how we understand the Irish *nation*, and therefore the Irish *self*.

Conceptualization as *others* simply means that the Muslim person in question, or the Muslim community as a whole are left in the margins, and their voices silenced from the definition of *Irishness*. Thus the exploratory aspiration and claims for the process of drama become instantly self defeating, and regressive. A traditionalist nation-narrative remains in force in the language pedagogy and is thereby reproduced.

With the myth of Irishness and identity and in the context of the foundational elements of this analysis, human agency at the level of the individual practitioner is thus rendered redundant on one level and hugely empowered at another. The strong ideological and political orientation of both the PoET and educational institutions precludes individuals from affecting change at a systemic level, and forces them to operationalise a curriculum which has a limited and limiting view of *self*, *other* and *nation*. Yet, because of the nature of drama, the practice of

individuals can successfully deal with the complexity of the politics of identity. In doing so practitioners can seek and find the voices so essential to this process, but can also use those voices to become active and discursive practitioners within their community. Such is the janus-faced nature of the operational myth of Irishness and identity.

**CHAPTER NINE**  
**THE WAY FORWARD**

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### Critical Mythologies in Drama as Education

Mythmaking is a communication process which involves reception as well as (re)production. ... (T)o be the expression of a *myth* the telling of a given narrative in any particular instance needs to be perceived as being adequately faithful to the most important facts *and* the correct interpretation of a story which a social group already accepts or subsequently comes to accept as true. It will carry authority when it is communicated in an appropriate way, by an appropriate teller or set of tellers, in an appropriate historical, social and ideological context. The extent to which there is latitude or even questioning of particular elements in the story will no doubt depend on a range of factors proper to the group within which it circulates, the type of ideology by which it is marked, and the story's centrality or otherwise to the structure of the ideology as a whole. (Flood 2002a, pp.43-44)

From the outset, this thesis has proposed a reinvention and reinvigoration of myth as a critical concept, with a view to it becoming a fully functioning device that enables the viewer to myth to also become a reader of myth (Barthes 1972).

This approach is premised upon three primary theoretical principles. Firstly, an understanding of myth as the orientation and focus of the work is taken from Barthes (1972). The importance of self-reflection in identifying cognitive interests, and communicative action potentially leading to perspective transformation through action (acting), is core to the writings of Habermas (1972, 1984, 1987), and can be described as the fundamental intent of this project. Foucault's work (1970, 1972, 1980) feeds this thesis on a plethora of levels, but central to it is his understanding of knowledge as a constructed entity. Knowledge comes about as a result of the operation of discursive formation, which is affected by forces of power that Foucault describes as external positive conditions (1972).

The methodological construct of the work has at its heart the idea of *bricolage* (Kincheloe & Berry 2004). The choice of this contemporary and post-modern approach was driven by the breadth of foundational texts being utilised in the work, and in response to five specific methodological dilemmas posed by this particular project. These included **identification** of the ambiguous and difficult entity under review, which necessitated usage of the term drama as education in order to avoid confluence with historically troubled rhetoric and discourse. The **location** of the work also proved a specific challenge, given the ‘dual’ nature of the site of the research in the fields of drama/theatre and education, as well as in the community of drama as education. Added to this, the location of the research in the multifaceted post-colonial entity that is Ireland. Issues of **complexity** also dictated much of the nature of the methodology, given the range of critical approaches required to begin to deal with some of the core issues of the proposed mythologies. **Language** was never far from the heart of the approach, given the restricted range of discourse that compromises the language of the community, as well as the predominance of rhetoric. Finally, **access** proved to be a guiding factor, given the difficulty in accessing some of the intangible and esoteric ideas around which the myths are constructed. What resulted was a *bricolage* that utilises modernist perspectives and approaches, but in a fundamentally post-structuralist manner.

Whilst the focus of much of the discussion in the preceding pages has been firmly upon the location of the Point of Entry Text (PoET) in the Republic of Ireland, the intent throughout this work has been to provide the basis for the



creation of an approach and a set of critical tools that can be employed with regard to any aspect of drama as education, regardless of location.

The final stage of the work now demands a triple focus. It necessitates the re-identification and further distillation of the conditions necessary for demythologising, particularly in the light of the debate that has taken place in earlier chapters of this thesis. It demands some informed debate as to the boundaries and the future of myth, and a specific answer to the question of what should and can replace the myths of Irish drama as education identified in this work. Finally, it requires an engagement at a pragmatic level with the concept of demythologising as remythologising as detailed in Chapter Four, specifically Figure 4.4.

### **The Conditions Necessary for Demythologising**

Prior to engaging in demythologising, recognition is demanded of the existence and nature of four specific conditions. These invisible elements control the construction, perpetuation and operation of myths in drama as education, and an understanding of any particular myth can only be garnered by closely examining the manner in which these components effectively and intimately work in tandem with each other. Ideology, power, language and human agency drive myth in conjunction with each other. Their place in the model proposed here is detailed in Fig 4.4 (p.155). As has been seen throughout this work, it is frequently impossible to discern where one meets the next with regard to their roles in the creation, perpetuation and promotion of myth. What is clear, however, is that

within any given specific mythic discourse, one of these elements is generally more dominant than others and can be seen to drive the manner in which the other elements or conditions operate.

These elements transcend the four distinct areas of myth proposed in this typology; - governing, traditional, epistemological and operational – which by their nature are local, whereas ideas of power, language and ideology as well as the ubiquitous presence of human agency exists in some form in the community, regardless of the location or site of the research.

Some examples can be garnered from the preceding chapters as to how each of the four elements control areas of mythology. Power and politics can clearly be seen at play with regard to questions of form and performance. The choice of a particular brand of process drama, and the exclusion of performance as being of importance in primary drama are political choices brought to bear through political means. Similarly, the domination of a naturalistic and representational understanding of drama signifies a dominant ideological emphasis in the myth of the universalism of drama as education. Language is clearly directly involved in driving the myth of rhetoric in drama as education. In this, the ability of heightened language to make the case for a particular ideological or political stance is evident, but upon demythologising what becomes more evident is that in doing so, language as rhetoric undermines the philosophical potency and functional integrity of a document. Human agency is omnipresent throughout myths as they are understood in this thesis. It figuratively shapes both the hand of the mythologiser (whether that is an individual, collective or institution), as well

as that of the demythologiser. Its effectiveness is most clearly seen at play in the discussion concerning the implementation and acceptance of drama in Irish primary schools. Leaving aside momentarily the ideological, political or linguistic impulses that shaped this myth, what is obvious is that the act of human agency has clearly fashioned its form. What is meant by this is that the decision to design a curriculum that is ill-equipped on a real and practical level, and then implement it in a less than comprehensive manner, are acts of human agency visibly at play.

### **Demythologising as Remythologising**

Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts, myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion ... (I)t transforms history into nature. (Barthes 1972, p.129)

It is not possible to banish or destroy myth – Barthes claims it is simply possible to read it, and then bear this reading in mind, whilst re-engaging with the cultural institutions that the original myth shaped. That stance is not sufficient for this thesis, given the focus of communication potentially leading to action (in the form of perspective transformation), that the work aspires to. It is necessary to read myths, to understand the critical forces that are their lifeblood, and then to re-engage with myth, but not simply as a passive participant. A critical mythic perspective also demands agency; it demands that those who hold positions in fields of cultural production or fields of power, act in the sense described by Sennett (1976), and reshape and remould mythologies. This reshaping and remoulding will, of course, be laden with implicit values in power, ideology and language. The outcomes will be mythic in every sense, but with a difference. The distinction belonging to these new myths is that they have emanated from a

critical process, thus rendering them transparent to the reader. Other difficulties will be associated with the new myths in time; this is entirely inevitable and necessary to prompt another bout of demythologising, but what will be banished is the dogged opaqueness so characteristic of many of the mythologies delineated throughout this thesis.

In the spirit of this reinvention of myth and remythologising, what is now necessary is to re-examine how the typology of myth central to this project might appear after such a process. Referring back to Fig. 4.3 on page 136, the first stage in demythologising is to clearly identify the cultural and educational intermediaries around which the various classifications of myth revolve. This is relatively straightforward process. In the community of drama as education in Ireland, they currently are: the children, teachers, schools, communities<sup>liv</sup>, parents, artists, drama/theatre organisations, educational organisations, arts organisations, the Department of Education and Science (DES), Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP), National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), and the Arts Council. The symbolism attached to naming these stakeholders infers and confers a responsibility on their part. Responsibility for the creation and perpetuation of mythologies in drama as education lies with members of these groupings. So too, does the task of demythologising and remythologising.

Given the cultural nature of myth, both the categories of myth themselves, as well as the process of demythologising and remythologising being described

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<sup>liv</sup> Community is understood here in the sense of the wider school community, which is broader than the stakeholders listed separately here.

here, are not as clean-cut as has been suggested heretofore in attempting to describe them. Their surreptitious form and potent nature ensures that little about them is readily evident. The boundaries that dictate the extent (limits) of one myth and the beginnings of another are at best vague, and at worst indistinguishable. This difficulty also pertains to the margins between myth, demythologised myth and remythologised myth. It is held here that once myth is subject to examination under a critical lens, and its operation becomes clear, as does the manner in which power, ideology and language control the myth, then it ceases to be a myth in the same sense it once was. It is remythologised, but this may involve only a slight shift in its nature. The challenge for the demythologiser, and recalling the acting intent of this work, is to attempt to ensure that the process of remythologising is somewhat more substantial. As already stated, it needs to be immediately recognised that such remythologising will be greatly shaped by the ideological, political and linguistic persuasions of the demythologiser and driven by their agency. In summary, remythologised myth after a process such as the one entered into here is critically aware, but is in danger of only shifting slightly in meaning.

Taking the case of this research specifically, the actor driving the demythologising is part of the community of drama as education, and more specifically, the Irish cultural and educational intermediaries that brought the myths discussed here about it the first instance. Therefore and inevitably, no great revolution will be attached to the process, as the demythologiser has to consider issues of position, respect, cultural capital and symbolic power. However, that is not to say that the process is redundant, and a range of

possibilities still exist in exploring what a significantly remythologised curriculum might promote.

Specifically, the question needs to be asked as to how does a remythologised Irish primary drama curriculum still offer young people a means of engaging with the world on a meaningful level? How does a remythologised curriculum combine or not the claims of process drama with a continuity of tradition? What model of theatre underpins the remythologised curriculum?

These three questions are answerable only to a degree, but a flavour must be attempted. A remythologised Irish primary curriculum should take the best of what the current document contains, the best of what the dominant aesthetic traditions have to offer, the best of contemporary practice in the world-wide community of drama as education, and strive to be a document that holds standing and respect in both the fields of education and drama/theatre. It certainly needs to abandon the narrowing confines of McArdle's theoretical stance, and throw itself open to a plethora of influences and confluences. It needs to be real about where it stands, what it wishes to achieve and how it will get there. More than anything, it needs to be defensible and comprehensible.

In order to develop this, a concise discussion of potential paths in remythologising will now be considered. This will discharge a dual function in terms of the traditional academic purpose of a thesis: it will essentially outline the findings of this work, such as they exist within a *bricolage*; and it will make recommendations to the fields of drama/theatre and education, and the

community of drama as education in terms of moving forward with a critical discussion of myths. Unlike much of the analysis, which was located in the Republic of Ireland, these efforts at remythologising are aimed very much at the broader international fields and community.

### **Remythologising Governing Myths**

Part of the ongoing difficulty with establishing strong and widespread practices in drama as education has been the weakness of its governing myths. These myths cannot be easily changed. New governing myths will only come about as a result of this demythologising when the critiques contained in Chapter Five garner the very high levels of political and ideological acceptance which might ultimately see their perspectives incorporated in official documents. This is a process that will take time, and is made all the more difficult by the fact that the official documents of the community of drama as education tend to reside in either the fields of education or drama/theatre. As has been seen in Chapter Three, few enough members of the community of drama as education hold the sort of positions to effect rapid and substantial change through agency in either field. In the shorter term, however, acceptance of the outcomes of demythologising could result in the creation of a number of less substantial but nonetheless important governing myths within the community.

A new governing myth for drama as education would foreground the importance of **language**, and in particular recognition of the fact that difficulties with language, (especially rhetoric), have impacted negatively upon the development

of the community thusfar. The myth would stress the importance of language for advocacy, but also for advances in clarity of purpose and unity of function in teaching and learning. It would place the onus upon those engaging in discourse in the community to refine, simplify and improve their usage of language, and avoid recourse to rhetorical language. It would also face facts, and clearly acknowledge that drama is currently not widely accepted or **established** as part of many educational systems. As a result of this, clarity of ideological intent and mission, as well as strength in political advocacy is required and is a necessary function of those engaged in drama as education.

In addition, such a myth would consider that drama as education remains a relatively **young** pursuit, unlike many other educational endeavours, such as its sister areas of music education and visual art education. This youth demands that special cognisance be taken of its constantly evolving state, its fluid and relatively shallow levels of discourse and fluctuating research trajectory. However, it would also suggest that a concerted effort be made to contextualise and locate the work being done within the context of work done in the past as well as work being carried out in other fields and communities. It would also acknowledge that problems result from the fact that drama as education is not a clearly-defined **sub-field**, and that those who hold most political strength are agents who hold positions in both the fields of education and drama/theatre. Drama as education needs proponents to develop stronger positions and garner greater cultural capital in the fields of drama/theatre and education. Bourdieu notes that boundaries of a field of cultural production is a site of struggles, but interestingly, the only form of defence available to a field against 'heretical



transformation', is to first admit the adversaries by recognising their polemics (thus granting them cultural capital), and then defeating them internally (1993, p.43). The point is that fields by their nature are open to change if the polemic for change is strong enough. As discussed in Chapter Four, it can therefore be inferred that through the same mechanism, fields are susceptible to a form of division. Where this would come into play is if enough drama as education position-takers were to occupy heteronomous positions in the fields of either or both drama/theatre and education. There would then exist an undeniable claim and momentum for the recognition of a sub-field of drama as education. This myth, therefore, needs to emphasise the importance of producers/teachers of drama as education working towards taking powerful heteronomous positions in their fields.

### **Remythologising Traditional Myths**

Change to traditional myths can only come about as a result of the process of demythologising being widely and clearly communicated throughout the community. In terms of timescale, it is inevitable that substantive remythologising will take some time. If properly done, however, this will lead to an acceptance amongst practitioners that fundamental aspects of unquestioned traditions are flawed, and do not contribute to the overall health and stability of the community. From this dissatisfaction, new traditional myths will emerge. These must, by their nature, emerge from within the cultural and educational institutions.

A remythologised traditional myth would speak clearly of **learning** in drama as education, and would embody the idea that children learn in and through drama in a variety of ways, each of which holds merit and value in its own right. It would seek to problematise any concept of drama as education that looks to dominate discourse or claim supremacy. It would also try to locate drama as education within a societally based understanding of drama – which foregrounds acting and participation as opposed to representational forms, though recognising their intrinsic worth and merit of that tradition. This myth would have the ability to aid drama as education to move beyond the fallacy of progressiveness which currently dominates discourse, predominantly because of the empty rhetoric of representation. It will embrace acting in every sense, and recognise the potential drama has to make a substantive difference in a range of different ways.

Strong indigenous and local **traditions** of drama as education around the world would be at the heart of such a traditional myth, and these should be recognised and fore-grounded in the development of a localised, responsive and contemporary praxis. Normative universalism and ideal speech situations would be recognised in such a myth and Habermas' entreaty for the need to problematise universalism, particularly in order that cultural particularism can be avoided, would be foregrounded. This is a substantial and pivotal aspect of any remythologising. In drama as education, this means that a myth of **normative universalism** has to be established which puts in place an established belief that the universal is always located in the local and the particular. In order to facilitate this, ideal speech situations have to be fundamental to practice in drama as

education, in order that practitioners would be required by the community to engage in discourse with regard to their practice.

### **Remythologising Epistemological Myths**

Debates regarding whose knowledge is important and should be selected for ‘transmission’ throughout the school system have been encountered repeatedly throughout this work, as have questions regarding the nature of knowledge itself. The potential timescale involved in remythologising epistemological myths is somewhat more accessible than in the previous two categories, given that change in the knowledge-base is an accepted facet of change in both the fields of drama/theatre and education.

A new epistemological myth would deal with the issue of **form**, and should seek to embrace the fact that drama/theatre is a broad church, and to recognise the multitude of meanings that populate the field itself, as well as the specific community involved. As opposed to allowing drama as education to be dominated by dichotomies between, *inter alia*, representational and presentational theatre; intra-aesthetic and para-aesthetic pedagogies; as well as oral, communal and private, literary aesthetics of drama, this myth would foreground the potential of dialectic interaction between their supposed dualisms. This would create new and exciting surfaces of emergence, thus feeding discursive formations and thereby the creation of new knowledge.

It would also recognise that **acting** behaviour is central to all drama and theatre. This myth would grant acting the breadth it deserves – ranging from the classroom, to the stage to society. It would serve to banish the fear of acting so prominent in the Irish situation. As a society, we live in groups, therefore the idea of social intelligence (interpersonal intelligence in Gardner's typology) is hugely important. To mirror this in drama is to promote the idea of ensemble as being of pivotal importance. This has to occur alongside the move away from modes of representation to modes of participation, with an emphasis on acting. If human agents don't act in the world, nothing happens. The establishment of this aspect of the myth could be strongly resisted by fields of power because representation is easier to control than participation. Fear of the actor/acting in drama as education can be seen in some respects as representing a fear of participation in democracy. The form of drama as education that exists in Ireland is fearful of the actor. This can be aligned on an academic level with a fear of acting in society (Sennett 1976). The behaviour of the child is truthful but the behaviour of the actor is frightening would be supplanted by a continuum of acting as central to the concept of drama.

Alongside these aspects, a new myth would foreground the importance of strong, open and viable **relationships**. It would chart a revision of the relationships that exist between artists, theatres, children, teachers and schools. These should be relationships based on a shared language in drama and shared beliefs as to the power of drama/theatre in the lives of all. Such a feature of myth, if built openly and properly, can incorporate the economic imperative of arts institutions (audience development, programming needs, etc.), with the educational

imperatives of schools, as well as the most important imperative of all, the needs of the children. This would only work in concert with a new understanding of **curriculum** in the emergent epistemological myth. This would involve firstly disentangling curriculum from where it currently resides – tied up in issues of field, status and power. It would be disingenuous to suggest at this juncture of the thesis that a curriculum should not be political, but that is not the point being made here. What is being proposed in this myth is that the community of drama as education should not address and desire curriculum for reasons of status and cultural capital. Cognisance needs to be taken of Neelands' (2004) assertion that perhaps drama is better off residing on the periphery of curriculum, and that more can be achieved from this situation. Curricular status under this myth is not the 'golden cow' of establishment recognition that it may have been in the past. Instead it is to be seen in a real-world view as bringing with it imposed ideologies, power structures and language, as well as the possible benefits of formal acknowledgement within a system.

### **Remythologising Operational Myths**

Operational myths should perhaps be the most accessible for the purposes of remythologising, given that they are concerned with the most fundamental level – practice. That said, it may also be the case that they are the least susceptible to change, given that they reside furthest from systemic control, and exist solely in the hands of practitioners. It all comes down to the actors themselves. In terms of scale, that could mean that change might be instantaneous or might never happen at all.

Such a myth would have two important characteristics, both pertaining to the practitioners themselves, and concerning their voice and image of self. This remythologised operational myth would foreground **praxis** as opposed to practice. It would move away from the assumption that all practice in drama as education is fundamentally praxis, because of the self-contained reflective mechanism much drama practice encapsulates. This myth would serve to firmly separate the concepts of practice, experience, reflection and knowledge, with a view to helping teachers of drama in their search for voice, particularly in situations where drama is a new concern. At its more basic level, this myth will perpetuate the belief that teachers of drama need to develop stronger voices in order to deepen praxis and strengthen knowledge of drama as education.

With regard to their image of self, **identity** would be foregrounded for practitioners in this myth, especially the role of the *other* in drama as education work. It would advocate the use by practitioners of what Grady (2000) describes as an ‘embodied’ concept of difference – i.e. one which is identified in the *self* of the teacher before any ideas of *other* are engaged with. This runs to the heart of what drama has always tried to achieve, regardless of its form or manifestation. The difference being what this myth would bring is a conscious awareness that in order to engage with the *other*, the drama must be representative of *self*; at a personal, communal, societal and national level. This has concomitant implications for issues of identity in drama work, but also for the over-reliance on naturalistically-derived representational forms that dominate much contemporary drama practice, as demonstrated in the thesis.

### **The Future of Myth**

If the concept of myth as presented here is accepted and formalised, demythologising and remythologising must also be accepted as important, ongoing and necessary aspects of life in the community of drama as education.

Myths demand questions, questions and more questions. Feedback looping deepens complexity and problematises the myths. This is fundamentally a post-modernist stance, but at the heart of this thesis lies a modest modernist quest – to seek to examine how effective change can be brought about to the manner in which drama as education operates.

Specifically this involves seeking to begin to offer the possibility of effecting change to the way in which the community of drama as education critically engages with assumptions and unquestioned or unfounded beliefs. Myth as a critical concept fulfils this desire. It aspires to perspective transformation that may potentially enable change. It asks questions, and more importantly, provokes questions of itself. The future of myth is myth.

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